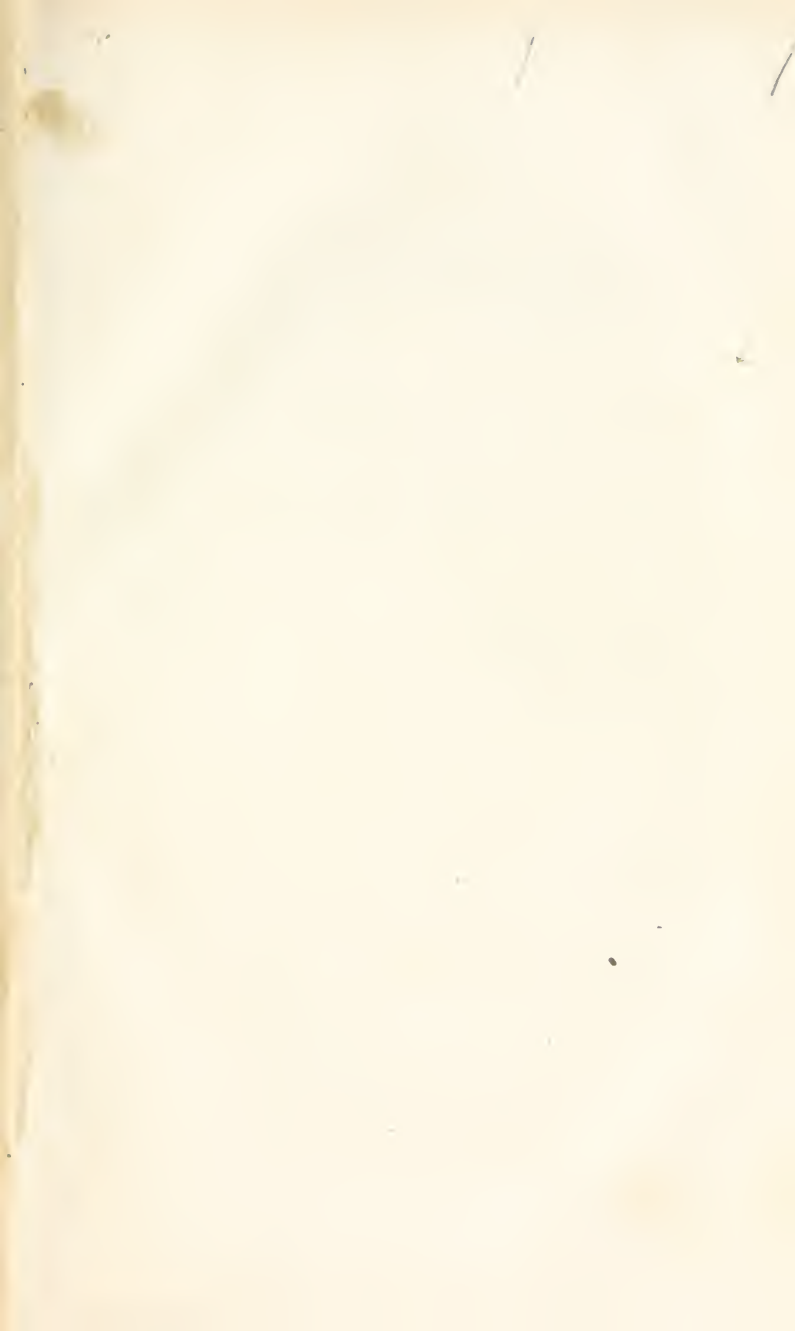






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RETURN OF THE WAGON FROM TOWN.

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THE
AUSTRALIAN CRUSOES;
OR,
THE ADVENTURES OF
An English Settler and his Family
IN THE
WILDS OF AUSTRALIA.

BY
CHARLES ROWCROFT, ESQ.,
A RESIDENT MAGISTRATE.

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FROM THE SIXTH LONDON EDITION,  
With Illustrations.  
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Preface.

IT is with the view of describing the process of settling in a new country ; of the precautions to be taken ; of the foresight to be exercised ; of the early difficulties to be overcome ; and of the sure reward which awaits the prudent and industrious colonist, that the editor has collected the following tales ; and he may add, that he can testify to the accuracy of the descriptions which they contain from his personal experience as a resident magistrate in the colony. The first tale which is presented to the public is the journal of a settler, detailing in his own homely language, the actual progress, day by day, from the beginning, of the establishment of a colonist's farm.

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LIFE IN AUSTRALIA.

Chapter First.

THE SETTLER'S JOURNAL.

I DO not pretend to be philosopher enough to analyze deeply the reasons which induce me, after a long and active life, passed for the most part in laborious but pleasurable occupations, to lay down the axe for the pen, and to write an account of my life in this country. Perhaps it is that my family being grown up, and gently pushing, as the young do, the aged from their stools, by supplying my place in overseeing my farm, the leisure that has come over me prompts me to employ my mind, which from habit is disinclined to inaction, in recalling past scenes and old recollections. Or it may be that, at sixty-two years, the garrulousness of old age inclines me to indulge on paper in the talk which every one around me seems too busy to attend to orally. I would fain hope that I am actuated by a better reason than any such as these: that the desire to present a useful history of a settler's life, and to show by my own

instance how much may be accomplished by prudence, industry, and perseverance, incites me to write this record of facts and feelings. Whether these accounts may ever appear in print I do not know, although I will confess that it is not without a secret inclination that they may, in some shape, find their way to the perusal of the public, that I now proceed to arrange them. Whether they appear in print or not, I have at least the satisfaction of hoping, that when I shall repose beneath the soil of this beautiful country, which I have learned to love so dearly, my children's children after me may sometimes turn to this manuscript of the old man's recollections not without advantage from its perusal.

Chapter Second.

Mr. William Thornley, a sort of Half-farmer in the County of Surrey, finding that he cannot live on his Small Capital, turns his thoughts to the Colonies—Reasons for Emigration—A Wife's hearty Consent an indispensable Preliminary—Preparations—Voyage to Van Diemen's Land—Appearance of the Country—He has an Interview with the Governor—Mode of obtaining a Grant of Land.

It is now twenty-two years since I left London for Van Diemen's Land. When I got on board ship, I remember I found many of the passengers keeping journals, so I did the same, though I can't say I found, at first, much to put in it; however, the habit of keeping a journal stuck to me after I landed, so that I was never easy at night unless I wrote down what had occurred during the day. I am glad of it now, as I find that the looking back on what I have gone through is useful to me, and makes me the more thankful for what I have got now, and the reading of it will, I think, be of advantage to those who come after me; so I will first describe how it was that I came to emigrate, and then I shall copy all my bits and scraps of journals fairly out, that those who may think that some profit is to be got from them may easily read them.

It was in the beginning of the year 1816 that I was first in difficulties in England; that was just after the close of the long war. There was great distress in the country; all seemed to go wrong. So many lost em-

ployment from the change of war to peace, that many were starving, and there was great confusion and riots. If I recollect right, it was the year when the "Blanketeers" came from the north to present a petition to the king. I had carried on, for many years, a pretty good business at Croydon, in the corn trade. I did something with coals too, the canal being handy (by-the-by, that gave me the idea when I went abroad of the advantage of water-carriage), and I never refused any sort of small trading that seemed likely to turn to profit. But the corn business was my main stay, and that brought me a good deal into communication with farmers, and their way of farming; but I found that farming was a very different thing here in Van Diemen's Land to what it was in Surrey. I remember, as if it was yesterday, that one morning, when I went to the corn-market, I found a cluster of farmers and others standing round a neighbour of mine reading a letter; it was from a son of his—a wild sort of chap—who had gone out as mate of a vessel to Sydney, or Botany Bay, as it was called then. By-the-by, Botany Bay and Sydney are quite different places; Botany Bay lies round to the south of Sydney, and there is no town at all there; Sir Joseph Banks named it Botany Bay from the number of new plants which he found there, but the town of Sydney was fixed thirteen miles further to the north. Well, the reading of this letter caused a good deal of amusement, speaking of the kangaroos, and the natives, and the bush-rangers; but what surprised us most was to hear how easily the young fellow had turned farmer; for farming was not at all in his line, as he had scarcely looked into a farm in his life when he was in England.

The accounts contained in this letter of the beauty of the country, of the fertility of the soil, and of the largeness of the crops, made a great impression on me, and gave rise to vague ideas and designs, which dwelt in my mind, and set me about making further inquiries. However, I said nothing about it at home at this time, waiting till I had acquired more information, but went on with my business as usual; but my business did not go on as usual with me. My purpose is not to describe how a man breaks down in England, but how he gets on in the colonies, so I shall say no more of my losses and difficulties than this; that with one failing and another failing, and people crowding into the trade and taking the bread out of one another's mouth, and altogether, I found that it would not do any longer. So one evening, after a hard day's work, and no profit, but all loss, I made up my mind to put an end to it. My wife was sitting alone in the parlour, and I said to her (for I ought to have said before that I had been married eleven years, and had five children), "Mary," said I, "things are going on very badly."

"They'll get better by-and-by," said she.

"They've been getting worse the last six months," said I. "I don't like the look of it at all."

"We must work the harder," said my wife.

Said I, "I tell you what it is, Mary, I work as hard as any man can, and we both of us spend as little as we can, but we are eating up our capital; and work as I may, and pinch ourselves as we may, we can't go on at this rate. You know how many have broke, and there's no chance of our money from them; in three years we shall have nothing left, and maybe we should

break down before then, for things are getting worse and worse, and the trade is like playing at hazard."

"Why, William," said Mary, "what would you have us do? Shall we try a farm?"

"Not in this country," said I. "What with rent, and rates, and taxes, and tithes, with corn falling, and all things unsettled, I'm thinking farming never will be the business it used to be. No, Mary," said I, speaking to her with much earnestness, "farming won't answer here; and with our five children depending on us for bread, and for their future provision in life, I should not like to risk the little that we have left in working at a farm in this country. We must make up our minds to a great effort, and since there are too many struggling with one another in England, we must go where the people are few, and the land is plenty. We must emigrate."

"Emigrate!" said Mary; "where to?"

"Why," I replied, "perhaps I have not made up my mind which would be the best place to go to, nor indeed could I make up my mind that we should emigrate at all until I had consulted with you, and you had agreed to it. But I have thought of the matter a good deal, and the more I think of it, the more convinced I am that it would be better for us to take care of what we have left, and turn it to account in a new country. If there was only you and me, we could make a shift, perhaps, to rub on; but when I consider our children, who are growing up, and how to provide for them comfortably I know no more than the dead, I do feel that to be sure of house and home, and bread to eat, and clothes to wear would be better for them than to be

exposed to all the chances of uncertain trading or farming in this country."

Well, I saw that the tears had come in Mary's eyes at this talk, and her heart was quite full; for the thought of her mother, now advanced in years, and of her relatives and acquaintances about, of the scenes of her early childhood and the companions of her youth, all to be quitted, perhaps for ever, was too much for her; and all the circumstances of our own losses and difficulties crowding in upon her thoughts, her emotion got the better of her, and she burst into tears, and sobbed for some time. My own eyes were not dry; but I felt that in these cases almost all depends on the firmness of the head of the family, and that if he gives way, all gives way soon after. I soothed her with all the kindness of an affection as true and as deep as ever man had for woman; I explained to her exactly our condition and all our circumstances, and after a long consultation, her good sense coming to her aid, and, most of all, her strong affection for her children mastering all other considerations, she fell in with my views, and it was agreed, that as we had made up our minds to this decisive step, the sooner we carried it into effect the better.

I have been the more particular in narrating this conversation, because it made, as may easily be supposed, a great impression on me as it related to one of the most important acts of my life; and from the circumstance also, that from that hour my dear wife never made a single complaint, nor uttered a murmur at all the inconveniences and occasional hardships which she was put to, as well during the voyage as during the first years

of our settling in the colony. This deserves the more worthily to be noted as I have been a witness, in Van Diemen's Land, of the evil effects of a contrary course of conduct on the part of the wives of emigrants. To my knowledge, more than one failure has happened from the fancies, and fine-lady affectations, and frettings, and sulkiness of settlers' help-mates; forgetting how much of a man's comfort and happiness, and, in a colony, of his success, depends on the cheerful humour, the kindly good temper, and the hearty co-operation of his wife.

Well, the great point being settled, that of my wife's consent and hearty concurrence in the project, all the rest went on rapidly enough. She was a little frightened at first at all there was before her to do; but she found that the labours and difficulties which, viewed in the mass, seemed almost insurmountable, were easily overcome as they were encountered singly: and, as she said at the time, with her cheerful smile, "that if we waited until we had provided against all possible and impossible contingencies, we never should undertake the expedition at all; that what others had done, we, with prudence, and care, and energy, might do also; and that, putting to the work all the zeal and industry that we could bring to it, we must leave the rest to that Providence which never deserts the willing heart and the humble mind."

I could write a great deal about all our hopes and fears, and our little and great troubles; but I am anxious to get to my journal. I shall not give a long account of our voyage by sea, of the sharks that we saw, and of the flying-fish that we broiled, because all those things have been described over and over again. All

sea-voyages are much alike ; there must be some discomfort on board of a vessel, where you cannot have much room to yourself, and the passage to New South Wales is, I dare say, often a very tedious affair ; but this I will say, that every thing is made better by good temper, and by a cheerful and contented mind. I have observed through life, that much of people's happiness or unhappiness proceeds from the way in which they take things. Some fret and grieve everlastingly at what cannot be helped, and lose the enjoyment of that which they might otherwise derive pleasure from, because they cannot have everything their own way ; and so they go on, miserable themselves, and making everybody else miserable around them ; while others, making up their minds to bear the annoyances they can't escape from, contrive to make pleasures out of very slight materials, and, by their own good-humour and cheerfulness, to inspire the like in others. But, before I begin our voyage, it will be well to state what our circumstances were on leaving England, and what we took out with us

I found, after scraping together all I could get, that I could just manage to muster up £1150 ; little enough to begin the world anew with, and with a wife, five children, and my wife's mother, to convey to the other side of the globe. It ought to be observed, too, that my wife had been well educated, and had always lived in a lady-like way ; and although she had always been an industrious housewife, she had never had any practice in the hard work which, for the first year or two, falls on the settler in a new colony. Besides this £1150 in money, we had our beds and bedding, and blankets and

linen, and such household articles, in plenty; and a variety of things which lie about a house, and seem of no value, we took out with us, and found them valuable, for use or sale, in the new country. As to the bulk of our furniture, we sold it all, as I was told that it would be several years before we could have a suitable place to put it in, and that I should find the money more useful; that I must rough it for some time, and think of nothing but STOCK—that is, of sheep and cattle. This advice was very good, as I afterwards found, and I was as happy, for many months, sitting on the stump of a tree, with my wife opposite me on another, as if we had reclined on the softest sofas in London. But there was not much time for reclining, as will be seen when I come to my journal. I took care to carry with us all the usual tools imperatively wanted on first settling, such as saws, axes, chisels, augurs, &c. I had the good fortune to listen to the advice of the captain of a ship, and took out all the furnishing of a blacksmith's forge, which I found of the greatest use to me.

Now to our voyage, which I shall make short enough. We set sail from Gravesend on the 7th of September, 1816. We touched at the Cape of Good Hope; but I shall not stop to describe a place that has been so often described before. I want to hasten the way to the colony. After a passage of about five months, we arrived at Hobart Town on the 3d of February, 1817. Hobart Town is the chief town or capital of Van Diemen's Land, at the south end of the island. The new ideas which the words "north" and "south" conveyed in those parts confused me at first; for, contrary to the impression which they convey in Europe, the north wind on the

opposite side of the globe is the warm one, and the south the cold one. "These warm north winds" and "these cold south gales" sounded oddly, and it was some time before I got used to the expressions. The aspect of the new country was not encouraging, and I felt a little damped at first. All the country up the river, from Storm Bay Passage to Hobart Town, had a mournful, desolate appearance. The trees had a sombre look, and the grass was a dirty brown, excepting here and there a green patch, where I was told it had been recently burnt. It looked like the close of autumn instead of the middle of summer, which it was, we arriving, as I said before, on the 3d of February, and the months of winter and summer being reversed here in this topsy-turvy place. A brown and dusky autumnal tint seemed to pervade all nature, and the place had a quiet, sleepy appearance, as if everything had been standing still and was waiting for settlers to come and improve it. Mount Wellington, as the large high mountain, about four thousand feet high, is called, at the back of the town to the left as you go up the river, had a little cap of snow on its summit, which I have observed in summer several times since, but it seldom remains more than a few hours at that season of the year. The town had a straggling, irregular appearance; a pretty good house here and there, and the intervening spaces either unbuilt on or occupied by mean little dwellings, little better than rude huts. It is to be borne in mind that I am speaking of Hobart Town as it was twenty-two years ago; since then, great changes have taken place, as will be found noted from time to time in my journal. One thing I can't help adverting

to, and that is, the surprising number of dogs that kept us awake for some nights after we arrived in the town with their incessant barking. At that time every one had a kangaroo-dog who could contrive to keep one, and what with these and others, first one set up a growl, and then another caught it up, and he was of course answered from another part of the town, so that presently hundreds of dogs, watch-dogs, kangaroo-dogs, and mongrels of all sorts and sizes, all would set up such a barking and tearing, that we thought to be sure something dreadful must be the matter; that the convicts had risen, or the natives had fired the town. We wished that all the dogs had their tails stuffed down their throats, to stop their noise. But we soon got used to this, like the apprentice that was lost, and found asleep in the copper that the workmen were hammering at outside; and afterwards we found the value of the faithful and intelligent kangaroo-dogs in the wild-bush; for their vigilance saved us all from being murdered by the natives, or perhaps burned to death, as I shall have to relate in its proper place. Well, I did not care, at this time, for the statistics, as the term is, of the town or the colony; I was too much taken up with my own statistics, and with arranging to settle ourselves on our land, and get out of the town, for we soon found that our money would melt away very fast if we staid there, and no return for it, everything being so dear. I paid 35s. per week for the wretched place that we got shelter in: as to going to an inn, of which there were one or two indifferent ones, of a public-house order, that would have been ruin indeed. Meat was 9*d.* and 10*d.* per lb.; bread a little cheaper than in London; as to milk and butter, that we were obliged to go without.

Altogether, I did not like the looks of matters; but I was assured that the interior of the country was more inviting, and I was advised to lose no time in getting on my land, for it had been observed, that more than one emigrant who had lost his time in loitering over the town, gaping and staring about, and fretting and complaining because all things did not come easy to his hand, had soon got rid of so much of his money, as not to have enough left to establish himself, and carry him through the first year. I must own I could not help feeling strange in a new country, where everything was so different from what one had been used to at home; and the difficulty of getting a female servant, and that a convict one, to help my wife with the children and the house, trifling as it may seem to speak of, troubled her sadly. I felt very queer myself among the convicts; some with yellow jackets on, and some without, but all with a peculiar look, as it seemed to me, with here and there gangs of a dozen or more working on the roads with chains on their legs, and making the place look, as I must confess, not very respectable. However, I had not expected to find plum-puddings growing on the trees ready baked, and beds of rose-leaves ready spread to lie on, as some did, so I plucked up heart, and set to work. My first care was to see all our goods and chattels safely landed from the ship, and properly housed in a store belonging to a merchant in the town. This I had to pay dear enough for. I was rather puzzled to know what to do with my money, in a land of convicts, where every finger was a fish-hook; but the governor allowed me to deposit it in the treasury. As it was all in dollars, the weight was pretty heavy, more than I

could carry by myself; and I said jokingly to my wife that I had sometimes read of the embarrassment of riches, but that I had never felt it before. After all expenses of outfit and passage paid, I found myself in the colony with 3600 dollars in hand, being about £780 sterling, having purchased the dollars in London at four shillings and fourpence a-piece. With this sum I had to set about establishing myself in the wilderness.

I had now to turn my mind to the fixing on a place to settle on. The way of obtaining land was very different then to what it is now, and, as I think, the alteration has not been for the better. The mode of obtaining land two-and-twenty years ago, was thus:—

Before leaving England, I applied to the office of the Secretary of State for the Home Department, by letter, stating my intention to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land with my family, and requesting an authority to obtain a grant of land when I got there. In reply to this, I received a sealed letter, addressed to the lieutenant-governor, and which, I was informed on an interview with the clerk to that department at the Home Office, contained the necessary authority. This letter, I afterwards ascertained, was an authority to allot to me a grant of land according to my means. When I arrived at Hobart Town, I waited on the governor with this letter. The governor, whom I saw himself, and who was very kind in his information and advice, made a note of my circumstances, of the amount of my property, of the number of my children and family, of my views in coming to the colony, and he dwelt much on the *bona fide* nature of my intentions to go on the land and work it. I told him that I had come with the intention of settling as a farmer, and of resid-

ing on my land, and cultivating it myself. At this time, in the year 1817, this class of settlers was always specially favoured by the colonial government, as indeed it was right and politic to do, for it was precisely the class that was wanted in the colony to form its inhabitants of the interior, to raise food for the colony, and to create establishments for relieving the government of the expense of maintaining the convicts. It aided the plan, also, of reforming the convicts, by removing them from the temptations of the town, and of habituating them to healthy work in new positions, where they would be removed from old habits and associations. Being one of this desirable class, I was told by the governor that he considered me entitled to as large a grant of land as was consistent with his general instructions; and that he should allot to me twelve hundred acres. Well, I thought, this was a good beginning. Twelve hundred acres of land of one's own has a good sound, and is a pleasant contemplation; but the next thing was where to find them. There was plenty of land unappropriated in the colony, but very much of it was bad land, and in unfavourable situations. On this point the governor said I must decide for myself; "that there was much bad land in the colony, and that the good land near the town, in any quantity at least, was nearly all taken up; but that if I thought of turning my attention particularly to the breeding of sheep, he should advise me not to be afraid of penetrating into the interior, for that he judged, from his communications from England, that emigration to these colonies would soon so much increase, that the difficulty of stock-owners would be to get far enough off from the influx of new settlers, so as to find sufficient range near their homesteads

for the feeding of their flocks and herds." And so I afterwards found it. At that time, when land was granted, it was a free grant, or gift, from the crown to the emigrant. This acted as a great encouragement, and I think the various plans that have been adopted since, although well adapted to raise the value of the land in the colony among the colonists, have had the effect of preventing many persons of moderate means, but of practical knowledge, from venturing to these distant regions.

I got the order easily enough, as I have said, but I found I had difficulties enough to contend against, and my first difficulty in respect to land was where to fix on it; for I heard so many contradictory accounts of the various parts of the country, every one praising his own district, as fancy or interest dictated, that I was fairly bewildered, and almost at my wit's end which way to turn my steps. But as the choice was one that must be made, and that quickly too, I set heartily about it. Leaving my wife and children, and her mother, who, though old, had the excellent quality of being trustworthy, as comfortable as I could make them in their lodgings in the town, and having arranged with a resident family to have an eye to their safety in my absence, I put my gun over my shoulder, and started up the country.

Chapter Third.

Resolves to lose no time in getting out of the Town and on to his Farm—his Journey up the country in search of good land—his talk with an old hand—he meets with a strange person and makes a new acquaintance—mode of Farming in the Colony—an Adventure.

HOBART TOWN was quite still when I left it about five o'clock in the morning, but the sun was getting up beautifully. There were only one or two stragglers about. I fancied the air was beginning to feel warm already, and the summer sun in Van Diemen's Land is no joke in a hayfield, though I don't remember that I was ever inconvenienced by it more than in England. When I rose the little hill going out of the town, I stopped and turned back to take a look at the town I was leaving. I certainly was much struck with it. It looked so like the BEGINNING of a town, there could be no mistake about it. It was all interspersed with the poles and scaffolding of houses being built, and it looked almost as if a lot of people had come only the night before, and had begun to set up a city to dwell in. On my right hand, as I stood on the hill looking down upon the town, was Mount Wellington, with thick, white fleecy clouds hanging down from its top and concealing its head. All the space between the town and the mountain was covered with trees and shrubs, having for the most part, a dusky green foliage. Nearly fronting me stood the Government house,

unfinished, and towards the left was the broad river Derwent, extending as far as the eye could reach to the south, till it joined the sea. Lying at anchor close in shore were two merchant vessels and a few boats. It certainly was a magnificent sight: the noble river; the fine harbour, allowing ships of five hundred tons burthen to anchor within a stone's throw of the end of the jetty; the tiny patches of cultivated land here and there, which seemed to give a hint of the treasures unclaimed around, and requiring only tillage to reveal them; and, above all, the air of sleeping enterprise which the quiet town in the early morning seemed to be invested with, formed together a remarkable picture. I stood looking at it a good while, and wondering what it would come to, when suddenly the bell of the convicts' barrack yard was rung to summon the government-men to work; and it served to summon me too, for I fancy that without being aware of it, I was a little loth to leave human habitations and plunge into the bush among the natives. However, I was on a high road as yet, though not a very good one, so after giving a little look at the spot where I knew my wife and children were dwelling, I cast a glance at the priming of my fowling-piece and marched on.

I met nothing between *camp*, as Hobart Town was then called, and New Town, about three miles. I remember I felt very lonely; I had not warmed into the work, and I felt all the hesitation which a man feels when he sets out to take a journey without having first determined where he intends to go. I was in fact a seeking where to go, and looking out for some information to guide me as to the point whither to direct my steps, with the impression on my mind, from my experience in the town, that every

one would endeavour to deceive me as to what land was vacant, and which was the best part to settle on. With all these anxious thoughts I continued my way, passing one or two miserable looking cabins by the road, till I reached the ferry on the right, about ten miles from camp. Here the river is still broad; about as broad as the Thames at Chelsea. At this place I made a halt, in order to decide whether I should continue my road to New Norfolk, about twenty-one miles from the camp, or cross over and take the high road, such as it was, leading from the one side of the island to the other, that is, to Launceston, on the banks of the river Tamar. I walked down to the edge of the water and talked to the ferry-men who were busy about their boat. They all advised me to go on to New Norfolk, where there was plenty of fine land, as they said, and a settled district. The master of the ferry, and of the inn belonging to it hard by, came up, and I asked him what he thought. He looked at me a bit as if to measure what I was worth, and shook his head in a very wise manner:

“You’re a new settler?” said he.

“Yes,” said I, “very new; and should feel much obliged if any one would direct me a little which way I had better go to look for land.”

“Much land?” said he.

“Twelve hundred acres.”

“Not much for a sheep-farm, but enough to make a tidy homestead.”

“I think it is; but where can I find a good bit of land?”

“Breakfasted?” said the landlord.

“Before I set out.”

“Oh!—Well, I tell you what I should do if I was you;

you had better take up your quarters with me for a day or two, and then I'll see what can be done."

"And then?" said I.

"And then you can cross the ferry, and—"

"Thank ye," says I; for I saw which way the wind was blowing; the ferry-men would have me go to New Norfolk to save themselves the trouble of pulling me over for their master, and their master would have me spend my money at his inn, and I doubt not advised every one, as he advised me, to cross his ferry, whether or no. So, thought I, I see I must depend on myself; now if New Norfolk is already settled, that argues that it was considered a good place to settle in when there was plenty of good land to pick and choose, so I'll go and see what the place is made of.

"Good morning," said I to the landlord, who was standing looking at me, and his ferry-men looking at him; "I shall see what sort of land they have at New Norfolk."

"You had better wait till evening," said the landlord, "you'll find it precious warm."

"I don't like to lose time."

"Take a glass of rum?"

"No, thank you, I never drink it." (The ferry-men grinned.)

"Or a glass of brandy?"

"No—much obliged."

"I've got some whiskey, real farantosh—: or Irish, with the true smack of the turf in it? Or——"

"Thank you, I never drink spirits in the morning, but I should like to have a drop of beer. Although its early, I've had a longish walk—and a little mild ale. . . ."

"Beer!—mild ale!—Lord love ye, why you haven't come out here to drink beer and mild ale, have you? You'll find no beer up the country. Rum's the stuff; that's our drink in this colony."

"Why, you have water, I suppose?"

"Water? Water! Oh! yes to be sure we have water; we always use it for tea; and I can tell you, a cup of tea, with a glass of rum in it, is very refreshing."

"I had rather have a drop of milk in my tea," said I.

"Why, maybe some would; but you see use is every thing, and it isn't so easy to get milk in these parts, so that rum is mother's milk to us now. Ha! ha! you'll get used to a settler's life by-and-by, rum and all."

"Well," said I, "barring the rum, I hope I soon shall;" and so I took my leave, not overpleased with the conversation nor with the landlord of the Ferry. However, it was his business to make people spend money at his inn, and cross his ferry, and we are all somewhat selfish, I take it, in our own vocations.

The sun began now to be pretty warmish, and my watch told me it was ten o'clock. Thought I, if it is warm at ten, I shall be melted at mid-day; but to New Norfolk I must go; so I put my best foot foremost, and strode away manfully. In about an hour's time, however, the sun's rays became so powerful that, not yet having recovered my habits of walking, I began to give way; and I looked to the right and left for a likely place to rest in. As I cast my eyes about, I spied a rough looking man seated on the ground at a little distance from the road, near a little rocky mount, drinking water from a spring which oozed over the shelf of a little platform of stone. Thought I, this is not one of your rum drinkers,

as he is soaking in the pure element with such gusto; but he's a queer looking chap too. It was the first of the species that I had occasion closely to observe, so I may as well describe him.

His feet were enveloped in a pair of old moccasins made out of a sheep's skin, with the wool outside, but much worn, it seemed, with travel. His legs were bare. A pair of very old knee-breeches, which once had buttons and strings, but which now had none, encased his nether person. The principal part of his dress was a frock-coat of kangaroo-skin, or rather of many skins, dried with the hair on, and presenting a curious variety of shade from wear and dirt. On his head he wore a hat, if hat it could be called, which once seemingly was black, but now was of no particular colour, the crown whereof was ingeniously fastened to the body with the fibres of the stringy bark tree, albeit that it permitted to peep forth the ragged ends of some dry native grass, which its owner had thrust within it (seeing that it was too large, not having been originally made for him), to maintain it in a becoming and convenient position. A grizzly beard of a fortnight's growth, gave a finish to his ferocious appearance. I surveyed this hairy individual with much curiosity, as I advanced towards him, and with some mistrust, for there were bush-rangers abroad, and although this was not a likely place to meet with them, I was strange to the country, and thought it best to be on my guard. I kept my hand therefore convenient to the lock of my piece, with the muzzle before me, careless like, but quite ready. My precaution, however, did not escape the observation of the kangaroo man, who now turning his face to me and looking up, said in a country-like tone:

"You needn't be afeard o'me, Master. If you want water, come and drink. Thank God, there is water in the country, plenty and sweet enough—except where it's brackish. Drink, (seeing that I hesitated) well—I'll go farther off; no wonder perhaps you're timid a bit.—If you'd a gone through what I've gone through in this wretched country, you'd have reason enough for it."

There was something about the man's manner and about his face too, though the sourest looking I ever saw, that made me feel there was no harm in him, so I stooped down and had the most delicious draught I think I ever tasted. I had learnt the value of water by my long voyage from England, but I think I never, even as a schoolboy, enjoyed a drink of water so much before. This mutual draught from the same fountain established at once a sort of companionship between me and the man of skins, and we sat down together by the side of the spring.

I could not help gazing at my new acquaintance with a sort of wonder, and thinking in my own mind that he formed a queer figure in the foreground of the arcadian scenery of the new country.

"You look at me."

"I can't help it," said I: "I don't mean any offence, but pray, do all the people in this country dress in your style? I don't mean to say that it is not a very proper dress, and (fearing to anger him) very becoming and suitable to the country; but I only arrived a fortnight since, and everything seems strange to me."

"Not stranger than it does to me," said the man. "How do you think I came by this *dress*, as you call it? Well—you needn't guess; I'll tell you, I'm dressed by voluntary contribution."

"Voluntary contribution! How's that?"

"Why, you see, about ten days ago, I was met by the bush-rangers on the other side of the island, and they stripped me of everything."

"They did?" said I, and I clapped my hand on my gun.

"Oh—you needn't be afeard—there's none on 'em here, and I hope you won't meet any in this horrible country. Lord forgive me—I wish I was well out of it. Fool that I was to leave my old master in Shropshire to come out here to get land of my own. Ah—well—go farther and fare worse. These rascals, these bushrangers, took every individual thing I had about me, and kept me for three days to carry their baggage for them. The one that took my coat, and a prime velveteen one it was, with plenty of pockets, chucked his kangaroo-skin jacket to me; 'here, my hearty,' says he, 'is something to remember us by. You can't say we haven't treated you well, for you have shared of the best with us, and we have shown you all the country.' These moccasins I got at a stock-keeper's hut, who let me fit the sheep skin warm to my feet, and they were comfortable enough at first, but now they are dry, they get unpleasant. But it's not long that I'll wear 'em, for I'll go back home again to England, if I have to work my passage. Heaven send that I was out of this horrible place! I do really think it was made before the other countries were begun, and found not to answer. There is nothing in it like anything anywhere else, and what's worse, there's nothing in it to eat."

"Nothing to eat! that's a bad job; how do people subsist then?"

"Oh! I don't mean there's nothing to eat exactly; though I don't know what one can get all over the country but mutton chops and dampers; but I mean that the country furnishes nothing of itself: no animals, no fruits, no roots. Now I thought before I came here, there must be plenty of fruit in a warm climate; but, bless your heart, you may look a long time in the woods for anything to eat, I can tell you. The only thing like a fruit that I've ever seen, is a cherry wrong made, with the stone growing outside. I did eat a lot of them one day when I was hard run, as I observed the birds eat 'em, and a pretty murmuring they produced in my inside; but that's neither here nor there. What I say is this: this is the worst country, and the most dreadful place that man ever was in, and all I wish is that I was out of it."

"I am sorry," said I, "to hear you give so bad an opinion of the country I have come to settle in, Mr. —; you have not told me your name."

"Crab—Samuel Crab; that's my name, and that was my father's name. You see I'm a Shropshire man, and for five-and-thirty years I was head ploughman to Squire Dampier, at Dampier Hall. A good master he was to me, and a fool was I for leaving him; but it all came from reading and writing."

"From reading and writing!—how was that?"

"Why you see, one day I was at the blacksmith's about a plough, and as I had nothing to do, I took up a newspaper that was there (od rot the writers on 'em), and began reading about the Colony of Van Diemen's Land, of all places in the world, what capital land was there, and what high wages were to be got, and how much farming men were wanted, and particularly ploughmen,

and how you were sure to make your fortune there quite out of hand like. Well, if ever I longed for anything in my life, it was to have a bit of land of my own, but I never could get hold of it any how, nor saw any likelihood of it. So, in short, I was seized with a sort of fit to go to Van Diemen's Land, and go I would, spite of what master could say. I had saved a matter o' 'bout a hundred and fifty pound, and so go I did, and now I'll go back again."

I was a little damped to hear this talk from a real farming man, and one, too, who had seen a good deal of the country, and I began to have misgivings of the prudence of what I had done in leaving a rich and settled country like England, for a new and wild region, such as Van Diemen's Land. My new acquaintance seemed rather of a dull and obstinate nature, like most farming men in the middle counties of England, and was likely enough to be prejudiced against the country after the mauling the bush-rangers had given him; but still I thought he could tell me what he had seen, so as he seemed inclined to talk, I went on to question him for the sake of information.

"What system of farming," said I, "do they follow most in this country?"

"System? Bless you, you don't suppose they follow any system here? The way they go on is quite disgusting to me; they know no more of farming than a Londoner. They don't know how to grow anything."

"No wheat?"

"Yes, they do grow wheat—such as it is."

"Barley?"

"Yes: barley."

"Oats?"

"Not seen much oats; however, I believe they can grow."

"Potatoes?"

"Oh—plenty of potatoes."

"Vegetables? cabbages, peas, beans, and such like?"

"Yes: I can't say but they can grow 'em; but they're too large to please me, and I'm sure they grow too quick; besides, it stands to reason that thiugs can't grow properly with the soil just disturbed, as it's done here. A man in my country would be ashamed to call it digging. And then to see what they call a field of wheat! I call it a field of stumps! And where there's no stumps they don't do much better. They just put the plough once through it, and there lies the sod turned up with the grass growing on it; and then a weaver chap, or a London pickpocket, comes with the seed in a bag, and oh, my eyes, how I laughed! he flings it about as if he was feeding the chickens; and then another chap comes with a large branch of a tree, drawn by a couple of oxen, and he sweeps the grain about, and that they call harrowing! and when that's done they just leave it."

"And what becomes of it?"

"Oh, first the cockatoos get a good bellyfull, and then the parrots and magpies have a peck at it. But it comes up at last."

"Well, that's something."

"Yes—maybe—but it ought'nt to come up done in that slovenly way. It's a shame to waste good seed so. And then when they *do* get a bit of land a little—not in order—but out of disorder, how they do work it, dear me! What do you think a sort of cockney chap said to me at Pitt-water, for I've been over there? Says

I to him, 'Friend,' says I, 'how often do you let your land lie fallow in these parts?' 'Fallow,' says he, 'what's that?' 'You're a pretty chap to be a farmer,' said I, 'not to know what lying fallow means. Why lying fallow means letting the land rest a bit to recover itself for another crop.' 'Oh,' said he, 'our land in this place never lies 'fallow,' as you call it; we just put the same crop in every year. There—that field has grown wheat for eleven years.' 'What, have you had the cruelty,' said I, 'to put wheat on that bit of land for eleven years?' 'To be sure I have,' said he, 'and shall grow wheat on it for eleven years longer, if I live.' Master, you might have knocked me down with a feather: I never before heard anything so horrid. I felt sure at once, that no good was to be done in a country where creatures harrow with branches of trees, and treat their land so cruelly. But it was worse than that when I came to look more into it. I know you won't believe it; they'll never believe it of me when I get back to Shropshire. This very bit of land, that I've told you of, that the creature grew corn on for eleven years without stopping, never had—no—not so much as a handful of manure the whole eleven years. What do you think of that? Would any Christian farmer in England treat his land so? Why, it's against nature!"

I now began to understand the sort of man I had to deal with; one of those obstinate sons of the soil who cannot be made to understand that it is possible to carry on farming in any other way than the way which they have been accustomed to; and whose prejudices against innovation are so strong, that they will not believe in the truth of what they see with their own

eyes, and wring everything from its true bearing to the backing up of their own notions. Now that I felt at ease with my new friend, I began to be amused with his oddity and obstinacy, and I thought, perhaps, as he had had some experience in the colony, and knew the country, he would be a useful companion to me, though not very prepossessing in his personal appearance.

"Well, Mr. Crab," said I, "what do you mean to do now?"

"Oh, I shall make the best of my way on board-ship, and get out of this miserable country as fast as I can."

"But to my certain knowledge no ship will sail for six weeks; what would you do in the town all that time?"

"Ah—there's another horrid thing against the country; when a poor man has been enticed over by all the lies of the captains, and ship-owners, and book-writers, here he must stay till some captain gets as sick of the country as he. What's to become of me for six weeks, I'm sure I don't know! To live in that wretched town is horrible, where all the people are convicts, or worse than convicts, with their wickedness and extortions. Only once did I go into a public-house while I was there."

"And how did you fare there?"

"Oh! I'll tell you: 'Glass of beer?' said I. 'Nothing under a bottle,' said the landlord. 'How much does your bottle hold?' said I; for I knew it was necessary to be cautious in dealing with these town chaps. 'Just the same as in England,' said he, showing a bottle with Barclay's bottled stout marked on the label. It's true—my heart did warm to the beer, and quite forgetting to ask the price, I said, with a sort of ,

glee, 'Out with the cork.' It was out in a twinkling; that drink was a prime one, I must say, if I never have another. 'Take a glass yourself, landlord,' said I. 'With pleasure,' said he, and filling it slowly to the brim, 'Your very good health,' said he to me. 'The same to you,' said I, filling another. He filled his at the same time, without waiting to be invited. 'How do you like it?' said he. 'Never drunk better in my life,' said I. 'What's to pay?' 'Half-a-guinea,' said he. 'Half-a-guinea,' said I, 'for a bottle of beer!' 'Yes,' said he, 'and cheap too; there's only two dozen left in the colony, and you've just drunk one of them.' The beer seemed to move in my stomach at this charge, as if it had got down there by mistake and wanted to come up again. I said nothing; I could'n't speak; I felt I was done. Had I paid the money in their paper shillings and sixpences it might have taken off the edge of the mishap a bit. But I laid down two silver dollars. The landlord took 'em up. 'Another sixpence,' said he. I pulled out another silver dollar, he gave me some bits of dirty paper for the four-and-sixpence change, and I made a vow that if ever I had the opportunity I'd sarve him out for it. But that's nothing to what I've suffered in this abominable country, which is fit for nothing but convicts and kangaroos to live in."

"Seeing how ill you've been treated in the town," said I, "and it seems that the bush-rangers have not treated you much better in the country, I hardly know what to say to you. I'm going up the country to look for land, but sadly in want of some intelligent person to advise me how to proceed. It is difficult to get sincere information, I fear, from people already settled, all

being interested in advising you to take land either near them, or far from them, as the case may happen to suit them. It is a difficult matter for a stranger to know what to do."

"You're a farmer, I take it, by your look?" said Mr. Crab, inquiringly.

"I can't pretend to be a farmer like you," said I, "because I am sure you're a thorough-bred one, but I know something about it."

"That's very properly said," replied Mr. Crab. "Well—I don't know, master, may I ask your name?"

"Thornley," said I; "William Thornley, late of Croydon, in Surrey: some good farming there."

"Why, for London farming, perhaps, there may be; but you Londoners can't be supposed to understand farming like us in Shropshire. However, master, I'm thinking, that if you like it, I'll go with you over the country a bit; and perhaps I shall be able to persuade you not to stay in this villainous place, but go back to the old country, where people farm their land like Christians. I suppose you don't mistrust me?"

"Not a bit," said I. "There's honesty in your face; so now, if you have rested long enough, let us be moving."

"Come along, then," said Mr. Crab, "and I can show you a way through the bush, where, although rougher than the road, we shall be screened from the rays of the sun."

One soon gets acquainted with one's fellows in the bush, where there is not much picking and choosing of companions, and I and my grumbling friend soon got pretty well used to each other. We strolled on leisurely,

through the bush, and were within a short distance of New Norfolk, when our ears were suddenly assailed by a confusion of sounds that startled the quiet wilderness, and made us wonder what outbreak or disorder could occasion such a furious outcry; presently we descried a horseman riding with all his might through the trees beside us, now jumping over fallen timber, then ducking his head to avoid the branches of trees, but in spite of the dangers, which he seemed ever to avoid by some special miracle, still keeping at the top of his speed, and urging on his horse, which seemed to be as much excited as the rider. Presently the cracking, it seemed, of innumerable whips, making sharp reports like small fire-arms, was heard around, and a straggling multitude began to encircle us. We were lost in amazement at these strange proceedings; but as this was my first introduction to a curious branch of the agricultural economy of a 'Settler,' I shall defer the explanation of the disturbance which confounded us to a new chapter.

Chapter Fourth.

How to milk a wild cow—Picture of a Settler's dwelling—Mutton-chops and dampers—A spare bed—"Improvisatised"—Night alarm—Sheep-stealing.

IN the meantime the tumult increased, and the shouts of men and the cracking of whips drawing nearer and nearer betokened a speedy catastrophe. My kangaroo-skin friend seemed to regard with a sort of scornful glee the hurly burly around us. His sour visage became puckered up into a knotty contexture, expressive of the most intense disdain, coupled with a secret satisfaction. "Now," said he, "master, you'll see how they manage some matters in this beautiful country."

"What *can* the matter be?" said I.

As I pronounced these words, a sudden crash of dead boughs and dry bushes at no great distance from us excited in me apprehension of danger. Instinctively I turned to the quarter whence the threatening sounds proceeded, and stood ready with my fowling-piece against accidents. I saw my friend Crab give a grim smile at this movement, as I was inclined to do myself, had I not been, I must confess, rather frightened; for at this moment I beheld a mad bull, as it seemed to me, making right to the spot where we stood. The animal appeared to be in a state of the most intense excitement, with its mouth covered with foam, its nostrils dilated,

eyes wild, and its tail twisted into that cork-screw figure indicative of a disposition to do mischief. I jumped aside as the creature made a plunge at me, glad enough to escape.

"It's a mad cow," said I. "I suppose this climate makes cattle very savage when they get worried?"

"Not madder than the people that are after her," said Crab; "however, wait a bit till you see the end of it."

By this time we were in the midst of the crowd which was chasing the cow, but I could not yet divine their particular object.

"What do you want to do with her?" said I to a tall thin man who had ceased for a moment to crack his whip; "she seems terribly wild."

"Wild!" said he, "the brute is always wild, but she's one of the best milkers I've got, and have her in the stock-yard I will this blessed evening, if I raise all New Norfolk for it."

"I shall be glad to lend a hand," said I, "but I'm not used to the ways of the country yet, and perhaps I might do harm instead of good."

But my aid was not wanted on this occasion, for at this moment a general shout in the distance proclaimed that the victory was won. I and Crab, with the tall thin man, the proprietor of the vivacious cow, immediately set off at a rapid pace for the scene of triumph. There were about thirty people assembled, among whom were one or two women. I observed that some of the men were provided with ropes made of bullock's hide twisted together, of great strength. I was still puzzled to know what was intended by all these preparations. Presently a farming man appeared, with a tin pannikin,

or a half-pint measure, and a stool with one leg. The stool with one leg looked like a design to milk the animal, but what the tin pannikin was for was a mystery to me. Had there been a milk-pail, I should have made out their object at once; but this piece of machinery was as yet but little known in the colony. I continued to watch the proceedings with great interest, when presently a man advanced with a stoutish long stick, or small pole, with a hide-rope forming a large loop at the end of it; the other part of the rope he held in one hand in a coil. Climbing over the rails of the stock-yard, which were formed of the solid trunks of trees placed lengthways, about six feet high, he stood within the space. The cow eyed him as if she was used to the game, and without waiting to be attacked, made a dart at him ferociously. This did not disconcert the man with the pole and loop, who, stepping aside with the most perfect coolness, and with infinite agility, let the animal knock her head against the rails, which she did with a force that made the massive pile tremble. This process was repeated several times, to the great amusement of the spectators, some of whom applauded the pole-bearer's nimbleness, while others were inclined to back the cow.

"That was a near go," said one, as the beast made a sudden plunge at her tormentor, tearing off with her horn a portion of his jacket; "she'll pin you presently, Jem."

"Never fear," said Jem, "a miss is as good as a mile. She is the most cantankerous varmint I ever see'd: but I'll have her yet."

"What are you going to do," said I; "kill her?"

"Kill her!" exclaimed my tall friend; "what! kill

the best, the nicest, and sweetest-tempered creature of the whole herd? She's so tame, she'll almost let you pat her, only she doesn't like to be milked; that always puts her out. Now for it, Jemmy, that's the way; haul in quick, keep it up—don't slack—hold her tight, now we've got her. Where's the foot rope?"

Watching his opportunity, the man with the pole had succeeded in throwing the loop over the animal's horns, and two or three men on the outside of the yard, quickly gathering in the end of it, hauled it taut, as seamen do a cable in getting up the anchor, round the thick stump of a tree. I looked at Crab at this stage of the proceedings, and I admired the expression of scornful enjoyment which his sour face exhibited. He gave me a glance, which said, without the necessity of words, "This is the way they milk a cow in this country." The cow, however, was not milked yet; to arrive at that conclusion, some further steps were necessary. The animal was now standing with its legs firmly planted before it, its neck elongated, its tongue hanging out of its mouth, and kicking with its hind legs continuously. These refractory members were now secured by a loop, into which they were dexterously insinuated, and half a dozen men catching up the end, hauled it out, and kept it on the stretch, to prevent her from plunging about. The creature, it seems, was now in a correct posture to be milked. Crab gave me another look.

The man with the one-legged stool and pannikin now advanced, speaking soothingly to the animal to be operated on, and using much ceremony and caution in his approach. Seizing a favourable opportunity, he contrived to squeeze a few drops of milk into his pannikin; but the





sensitive cow, outraged, it seemed, at this indignity on her person, gave a sudden plunge, which upset the heel-rope holders, and, recovering her legs, she kicked man, stool, and pannikin over and over. Shouts of laughter proclaimed the amusement of the bystanders, and numerous were the gibes and jeers lavished on the occasion. And now, the pride of the stockmen being roused, and their honour piqued by the presence besides of two strangers, the witness of their manœuvres, they set to again to manacle the almost-spent animal; and he of the pannikin, discarding the stool as a womanly encumbrance, boldly kneeling down, with the determination of a hero, and undaunted by the moanings and writhings of his victim, contrived to exude from her about half a pint of milk. This triumph achieved, the cow was set at liberty, the poles of the gateway were withdrawn, and the animal bounded into the bush.

"Well, master," said Crab, "did you ever see a cow milked that way before?"

"Surely," said I, "they might manage better than this."

"Ah!" said Crab, "this would be a tale to tell in Shropshire. It's worth while to go back only to tell this much. But you'll see more curiosities, master, as you go on."

"Come with me," said the proprietor of the cow, "and see my house, and my farm, and my wife and children. I see you're a stranger (addressing me); as to you," looking at Crab doubtfully, "you seem to have settled down into the habits of the place, to judge by your dress, though it is a little queerish even for the bush. Where are you come from?"

"I am come from camp," said I, "to look for land, and this—(gentleman I would have said, but as I looked at my companion the word stuck in my throat)—this settler—"

"Don't call me a settler," said Crab, "I arn't going to settle, as you call it; the bush-rangers, and the convicts, and the thieves of people have settled me."

"Well," I said, "I met my companion by the way, and he has had the kindness to offer to show me the country."

"You've come to the wrong place," said the New Norfolk man, "to look for land; there's none to be had here. The land hereabouts is but poorish, after all, and we settled on it more for the sake of the water-carriage than for the quality of the land. But there's my house, just on the other side of the water; cross over with me, and at any rate you shall have a hearty welcome."

I cannot easily describe the feelings of interest and curiosity with which I approached the place. I regarded it as a mirror into which I was about to look for the reflection of the condition which in a little time I was myself to assume. The golden visions in which I had indulged on ship-board had already begun to vanish before the rough realities of settling in a new country, and it was not without a tincture of sadness that I prepared myself for a view of a settler's farm. I will endeavour to describe it as it existed twenty years ago, and as it may still be found, in its material resemblance, in some parts of the colony.

I beheld before me a low building, which I afterwards ascertained was built of the logs of the stringy-bark tree, split in half, and set on end. The building was about

thirty feet long, and whitewashed. Its roof was composed of shingles; that is, of slips of wood about nine inches long, four inches broad, and a quarter of an inch thick. These shingles had acquired a bluish cast, from exposure to the atmosphere, and had a slatish appearance. At one end of the house was a rough-looking piece of stone-work, formed of irregular pieces of stone procured near the spot, and forming the end wall and chimney. At the back of the building was a tolerably large stack of wheat, enclosed with trunks of trees, forming an occasional small stock-yard. At one side was a garden, paled in with palings of the stringy-bark tree split into irregular rough boards or pales. I could see in this garden the aspect of the most luxuriant vegetation. In front of the house a small tree was left standing, from one of the boughs of which was suspended a sheep newly killed.

At the sight of our approach, it seems, an attack was instantly made on the carcass, as a man was busily employed in cutting it up. At the same time, a sun-burnt but very pretty face became visible at the door of the house, and instantly disappearing, a hissing sound was immediately heard within, proclaiming that some culinary preparation was put in progress. At a little distance was heard the bleating of a small flock of sheep, for evening was now set in; and from another quarter a team of bullocks, urged on by a strange looking driver, with an immense cracking of his whip, and a prodigious deal of expostulation, slowly drew near with a huge load of wood for fuel. We were in the act of entering the house, when our passage was impeded by a tiny swarm of little children, the eldest about seven—the youngest of the six being held up by the eldest to greet its father. Each was pro-

vided with a thick lump of "damper," which had been served out to amuse them until the more substantial repast should be prepared. The clothing of these urchins was of the lightest possible description consistent with decency, and moccasins seemed to be the prevailing fashion. They were clean, however, and cheerful, but inclined to have a lanky appearance, like little weeds running to seed. This, I ascertained afterwards, was the general appearance of the children born in the colony.

"Any milk, father?" said a little lisping girl.

"Just a drop, my dear, for your mother and the baby. Where's your brother?"

As he spoke, a slender lad, of about ten years of age, made his appearance, with a grave and tired air. He came up to greet his father.

"Sheep all right, Ned?"

"Yes, father; we should have left them on the Greenhill all night, but Dick saw two men watching the flock in the early morning, and he came upon them again in the afternoon. He doesn't half like their looks. But the sheep are safe enough now in the little yard."

"Now, Sir," said the New Norfolk man, "if you're inclined for supper, come along."

We entered the habitation, which consisted of one spacious apartment, opening into the air. At the end opposite the chimney a space was divided off into two small bedrooms. Opposite to the entrance of the house a door led to a skillion, which served for a kitchen; and it was from that spot that the hissing sounds, now become more violent, proceeded. In the middle of the principal apartment was a rough table of boards, on which were disposed sundry tin pannikins, a few plates,

with some odd knives and forks. A gigantic green bottle, containing rum, graced one corner of the table, and in the centre was set, as a place of honour, the pannikin of milk which had been obtained by the united efforts of the establishments within reach.

And now the hostess emerged from the back recess, bearing in her hands an enormous dish of mutton-chops, which was quickly followed by another dish, in which appeared a sort of doughy cake.

"I thought," said the lady of the house, "you would like a cake in the pan better than a damper; so here it is. Edward, help the gentlemen; they have had a long walk, and must be hungry."

This hospitable intimation was responded to by her husband, who forthwith thrust out of the large dish three or four of the chops into a plate, and handed them to me. "Help yourself," said he to my companion; "you're used to the ways of the place. Where's the salt? No mustard?"

"The mustard's out; we must have some more from the camp. And the salt! Well, that is unlucky. I declare there's not an atom left. Well, you must do without it, or we can send to Conolly's farm, not three miles off. I know they've got salt there, for they were to salt down a bullock to-day."

"Don't trouble yourself," said Crab; "I've got some salt in my pocket—in this kangaroo jacket, which the bush-rangers gave me for mine. I dare say they've missed the salt before now, confound them." With this he inserted his fingers into a recess of his hairy garment, and produced a small quantity of a blackish and gritty substance.

"Ah!" said our hostess, "that's come from Saltpan Plains. Well, any is better than none. And so, friend, the bush-rangers have had hold of you; did they treat you ill?"

"They just stripped me of everything I had got—luckily my money was left in camp—and made me carry their baggage for three days. No joke that in the sun, I can tell you. But I saw a good bit of the country with them. It's a dreadful country; all up hill and down dale. Scarcely a good bit of land to be seen anywhere. I do believe that there isn't any twelve acres in the country that would feed a single sheep for the whole year."

"You don't seem to like the country," said mine host, addressing Crab.

"Like it! How can any one like it? Who would live in it that could get out of it? There isn't one single thing to stay for. Poor land; where it's better, it's covered with trees, and they must be cut down before you can get at the soil to do anything with it. And then the stumps! Impossible to drive a plough in a straight line. And then, suppose you have stock; if you have cattle, they start away into the bush, and catch 'em again when you can! And if you have sheep, they're driven away by the thieves, and find 'em again if you can; let alone being shot at when you're looking after them. As to the bush-rangers, it's very pleasant, isn't it, to have your house broken open in the middle of the night, and everything cleaned out of it, while you have the satisfaction of looking on with your hands tied behind your back, and a blackguard pointing a cocked musket at your head? Oh! the fools that come

here deserve to be robbed, and starved, and murdered. I say, serve 'em right for being such fools as to come, and bigger fools to stay!"

The pile of mutton-chops was now diseussed, and the ponderous cake in the pan had nearly disappeared under the vigorous attacks of the party. Mine host now turned to the bottle of rum.

"If we only had a lemon here, we would eook up a bowl of punch. But, never mind, we must make the best of what we have got."

With this philosophic remark, he poured into his pannikin about a quarter of a pint of rum, qualifying it with what seemed to me an exceedingly small modicum of water out of a pail that stood by, and invited me and my companion to do the same. Not being used to the liquor, I declined, much to the astonishment of the New Norfolk man; but Crab, without any hesitation, poured out for himself a stiff portion of the stuff, evincing that in this particular he had condescended to conform with the customs of the colony. I must not omit to mention that while our banquet of mutton-chops was being enjoyed by the elder portion of the company, the good dame of the house served out tea to the juveniles from an iron tripod boiling on the hearth. A handful of tea was thrown into this receptacle, and set to boil. The tin pannikin of each was then successively inserted in the decoction, to which was added some very dark looking brown sugar. The unusual luxury of milk added an especial zest to this refection, the imbibing of which was interspersed with frequent and unceremonious attacks on the pyramid of mutton-chops, not forgetting the cake in the pan and the eternal damper, the never-failing accompaniment in those times of a farmer's meal.

Symptoms of drowsiness now began to appear. The young fry had long since been stowed away in their various dormitories, and our worthy hostess bestirred herself to contrive some place of rest for myself and my companion. With this intent, her husband was dislodged from a sort of wooden sofa or bench, and Dick was called in to assist in the preparations.

“Have those kangaroo skins been sent into camp?”

“No, missis—they’re in the hut—and they’ll make a capital bed for the gentlemen. I’ll get ’em in a minute.”

A heap of crackling skins was presently produced, which Dick, acting as chambermaid, proceeded to arrange for my accommodation. A contribution of blankets and rugs was levied on the premises to make up our beds, my friend Crab being accommodated with a heap of sacks spread on the floor. In this manner, after the usual compliments, we prepared to take our rest. Crab, I observed, flung himself on the sacks without the ceremony of taking off his clothes, and presenting the appearance of a huge hairy animal of a nondescript character, soon gave indications of being sound asleep. As for myself, fatigued as I was, the novelty of the scene, and the excitement of the day’s journey, kept me awake for some time. I pondered on my first day’s experience of a settler’s life; the rudeness of the cottage; the roughness of the materials about it; the coarseness of the food, in the manner of serving it, as well as in its substance; the slovenliness and uncouthness of the farming establishment, so far as I had been able to inspect it; and a feeling of disappointment and of insecurity which I could not shake off, all tended to sadden me. Everything was quiet within and without; the very dogs, watchful as they are in this country,

seemed to be buried in sleep. Gradually my thoughts grew more and more confused as weariness overpowered me, and I fell asleep.

My rest, however, was not destined to be of long duration. About three o'clock in the morning, I was dreaming that I was in Hobart Town with my wife and children, and that we were exclaiming against the annoyance of the ceaseless barking of the dogs. The barking grew louder and louder, and my children, it seemed to me, began to cry, frightened at the fierceness of the uproar. I started up to still them, and in so doing, awoke. The dream, however, had been suggested by a present reality. My host's dogs were barking violently outside, and the children were joining in chorus in aid of the general outcry. The door of the house was now vehemently assailed by Dick, the shepherd, and my host, roused from his slumbers, was quickly on the alert.

"Master!" cried out Dick, "the sheep are out of the yard—there's mischief abroad. You had better look to yourselves inside. The stranger gentleman has got a gun with him—is he waked up?"

"All ready," said I, jumping up in the dusk, "gun and all; but what's the matter? have the bush-rangers attacked us?"

"Of course they have," said Crab, who had risen from his couch of sacks; "of course! what else could you expect? Bush-rangers, ah, to be sure! this is a pleasant place to live in. But I suppose you won't give in, master," speaking to our host, "without a bit of a scrimmage?"

"Hope not," said the farmer, "it's bad fighting with the bush-rangers when you have a wife and children to

defend. But I don't think it's them; it's only some chaps after the sheep; but they must be cautiously dealt with, for they don't mind giving you a shot when they're close run."

"What's o'clock?"

"It's a quarter past three."

"Ah—then it's not far from daylight. Rouse up the men, Dick, and call the dogs in. It's not much use to follow till there's light enough to see the tracks. Keep close, my dear (to his wife, who had huddled on her clothes), while I'm away, and don't let the children stray about. This is no bush-ranger's affair, but it's an audacious trick to drive away a man's sheep under his very nose, I must say. I and Dick will follow the track. Give me my musket. Where are the cartridges? That's right. I'll take that half damper with me; we may want it before we come back. Dick, we'll take Hector and Fly with us; let the other dogs be kept back. I wish the mare had not run off to the bush just at this time. Well, perhaps we are better on foot, as it's sheep we are after. Now, Sirs, I must wish you good bye."

"Good bye!" said Crab; "not a bit of it. You don't suppose I'm going to eat your meat, and drink your rum, and desert you in this strait. No—no—I'll lend you a hand. Just give me a good thick stick, that's what I'm best used to, and I'll stand by you. And you, master," speaking to me, "you'll come too, won't you? Your barrel may be of use to us."

"I'll go with you with pleasure," said I. "I know nothing of the bush yet, but I'll do what I can to help."

"Thank you both," said our host; "we shall be four men with two barrels, and three men left behind to take

care of the farm. We may have a long journey before us, so prepare yourselves for it. Wife, get out a bottle of rum ; Dick, you'll have no objection to carry it, I'm sure ; but play fair, my man."

"Better take a couple of pannikins with us," said Dick.

"Right," said our host. "And, Dick, take a light tether rope with you—we may want it. And now let no one speak ; and don't let it be known, if we can help it, how many have left the farm."

"I think it would be the best way," said the practised shepherd, "for two to go to the right and two to the left, and meet at the Green Hill, so that we shall be sure to cross the track ; no doubt there will be plenty of tracks ; that's the trick of the rascals, but we must try to get on the main one."

"Take the man with the kangaroo-skin jacket with you, then," said the farmer, "and go to the left, and I and the gentleman will take the right. And here, take the musket, that there may be a barrel with each party. We must make the best use of our time, or we shall have no chance of coming up with the rogues."

The day now began to dawn, and there was light enough to see where to set the foot. Each party proceeded to its destination without further delay, and I soon found myself with the farmer at a considerable distance from the homestead. We kept near the banks of the river for about half a mile, and then turning to the left, the farmer began diligently to search for the tracks of the stolen flock. I assisted him in his search as well as I could, and we were both so absorbed in our examination, that we did not perceive, till we came

suddenly upon them, on turning round an eminence, a mob of natives, seated by a fire. They started up at our approach, and the farmer, laying his hand on my arm, paused, with some signs of alarm, to reconnoitre them.

Chapter Fifth.

Pursuit of the sheep-stealers—Meeting with the natives—The black man's instinct in tracking—Walk over the country—Finds land to please him—Returns to Hobart Town with his new acquaintance, Crab—Proceeds with his family to the Clyde.

"THERE'S no harm in them," said the New Norfolk man, after having examined the natives for a little time; "this is a town mob; you see they have got blankets among them; but it is always well to be on one's guard, for they're treacherous devils. Don't let your gun out of your hand, and don't show any fear of them. Now we'll go among them; if I could make 'em understand that I am looking after strayed sheep, they could be of use to me I don't doubt."

While he was speaking, we advanced towards the fire, the natives standing near us here and there, and gazing at us with a sort of cold, lazy, idiotic look. Near the fire was the log of a tree, and my New Norfolk friend motioned me to sit down.

"Sit opposite to me—there—face to face—so that each may see what is going on at the other's back, without seeming to take particular notice. I'll try if I can make anything out of these fellows."

Three or four of the natives, meanwhile, re-seated themselves at the fire, and resumed the meal which, it seems, our approach had interrupted.

I was a little curious to observe how these grave-look-

ing black personages were pleased to conduct the ceremony of their morning's repast, and my curiosity was presently gratified. Being satisfied, I presume, that we had no hostile intentions, they continued their culinary preparations. A tall and slender young lady, with a ragged blanket gracefully festooned about her person, appeared with a net slung round her neck, in which was a large lump of gum. She handed this lump of gum, about the size of a small cocoa-nut, to one of the men. Another lady produced an opossum, which looked to me something between a dead cat and a squirrel. The gum and the opossum were thrown on the fire, the hair on the outside of the latter, and whatever it had in its inside helping to its relish. After the gum and the opossum had fizzed, and crackled, and smoked a little time, one of the party snatched out the opossum from the fire, and plunging his face into its entrails, enjoyed himself with the delicacy for a brief space, and then threw back the remains on the fire; another of the party snatched it up, and tearing the limbs asunder, and picking off the choicest bits, chucked the half-picked bones to the ladies of the community, who stood behind them, and who received these testimonials of affection with much submissiveness and respect, and with considerable gratification.

"They don't seem to have much respect for the ladies," said I to my New Norfolk friend. "These black fellows take the lion's share of the breakfast."

"Oh, that's the way they always treat their gins."

"Their gins! what are they?"

"Oh, they call their wives 'gins.' You see, a native will have three, or four, or five, or perhaps more wives, according to accident—sometimes more, sometimes less;

I rather think it's according as they can find food. They make their gins work for them, and collect the little bits of gum from the trees, such as you saw in that one's net just now. And they're capital hands to catch opossums ! I've seen a black gin get up a stringy bark tree after a 'possum as well as any one of the men could. But they seem to have done breakfast. I must try now to get them to help me after the sheep."

It is to be observed that the repast which I have slightly described, passed in utter silence, the natives eating voraciously of the singed opossum and the hot lumps of gum without speaking or noticing us. On the principle that it is ill to come between a fasting man and his meat, the farmer had refrained from asking any questions or making any proposals about his lost sheep, until the natives were free to attend to him. He looked out, therefore, for the chief of the party, and the following colloquy took place :—

"Much kangaroo?"

"Kangaroo gone."

"Opossum good?"

"Good."

The correctness with which these few words were pronounced by the black man surprised me.

"Do they speak English?" said I to my companion.

"Only a word or two; but they are capital mimics; they catch hold of a word and repeat it very correctly even when they don't understand it."

"Sheep many?" continued my companion to the chief.

"Sheep many."

"Sheep gone," said my friend, pointing to a hill in the distance.

The black man shook his head.

56 STRIKING A BARGAIN WITH NATIVES.

"Find sheep?" said the farmer, accompanying the words with the action of a man searching for tracks on the ground.

The black man turned to his companions, and said something to them which we could not understand. The group gathered nearer to us, and chattered together doubtfully.

"They have not seen the sheep driven away," said the farmer to me; indeed they could not, as the job was done before it was light, and the natives never move about in the dark; "but I think they understand what I mean, and are considering about it in their way. See, the black chief with the red cotton handkerchief round his neck is going to speak. I suppose it's about the terms."

"Sheep gone?" said the black man.

"Gone!" said my friend; "can't find;" and he repeated the gestures of looking for tracks on the ground.

"What give?" said the native.

"Now what shall I offer the raseals?" said my friend. "They are too knowing by half; I don't know which are the worst, the wild or the tame ones. It's astonishing how soon savages learn our Christian ways of doing nothing for nothing. By the look of that black villain's face, he's determined to make a bargain of it."

"I've some dollars in my pocket," said I; "I'm sure they are much at your service."

"It's not dollars they want; they don't understand the meaning of money yet; but they want what's as good as money."

"What give!" said he to the black functionary; "give bottle of rum."

The words "bottle of rum" seemed to be perfectly well understood by the black creatures, but they looked to their chief; their chief looked at them, and seemed to consider in his mind how much, after sharing the contents of the bottle among his tail—to the number of about twenty—would remain for himself.

He shook his head.

"One bottle," pointing to the group, "little."

"The old rascal," exclaimed my companion; "he's as hard to deal with as a camp storekeeper; but he can do what I want if he likes, I'm sure; I'll try him with another bottle."

"Two (holding up two fingers), two bottles of rum."

"Two," repeated the chief to his gang, pronouncing the words very correctly. The natives looked irresolute; but the chief decided.

"Two bottles—little."

"We had better make a pretence of going," said the farmer; "then, perhaps, they'll agree."

"Two bottles much. Good bye."

"Good bye," said all the natives together.

"Why they seem all to talk English," said I.

"They've all caught that word up. But we must have that old fellow to help us. Confound him! But, however, I can water the rum, that's something."

Turning around, we observed the natives still looking at us, as if waiting for a last bid.

"Three bottles," said the New Norfolk man, holding up three fingers. "Three big bottles of rum."

We were turning round to continue our way, when the black negotiator, concluding that he had now arrived at the limit of the reward, called out—

"Tree bottle—good!"

We stood still upon this; and presently four or five of the men joined us. A consultation now took place between them, and after some considering, the chief pushed forward a young slim native.

"Good," said he; "find sheep."

The farmer not approving of this substitution, shook his head.

"Pickaninny not good to find sheep. You," pointing to the chief, "you go."

"No go—gins!"

"Ah," said my friend; "he says he can't leave his gins. Well, I suppose we must take the young one. Come."

The young native immediately stepped forward. He was completely naked. The weather, to be sure, was very warm. His hair was woolly and frizzled; his limbs clean and straight; but his whole body was very slender, with the exception of that portion of his person which served as a receptacle for the opossums and gum-balls with which he had recently regaled himself. I could not help remarking on its extraordinary protuberance.

"These chaps are made to carry a good lot of provender," said I.

"They *do* eat enormously," said my companion. "Perhaps it is, that, as their food is very precarious, they think it prudent to lay in a good stock when they can get it; and so it swells 'em out a bit. But which way is the fellow taking us? Why, he's going back again. Ah! I see he's going back for the first track. Well, he knows what he's about; that's some encouragement. Look—

he's going to speak. No; he can't do that. But I understand him; he wants to know where the sheep were driven from. Let me see—where are we? Oh! there lies the farm, over that little hill." "There," said he, speaking to the native—"sheep there"—and throwing his arm away from it—"gone?"

The native considered a few moments, and then without any attempt to make his intention understood, led the way over a low hill that was to our left.

"This will bring us near the place where we appointed to meet the shepherd and your friend," said the New Norfolk man; "they will be wondering what has become of us."

While he was speaking, we heard a distant sound, as of some one hallooing, but with a cadence that was strange to me. The peculiar mode of the country—whether hit on by accident, or scientifically designed, I know not—of throwing the voice to a distance in the bush, was new to me; but I could make out the sounds easily enough. "Coo-oo-ee!"

"That's Dick and your friend," said the farmer; "they think we have missed them, and they are trying the chance of our hearing them coo-ee. I'll answer them."

With that he put his hands to his mouth, and replied with a loud and shrill "Coo-ee?" His cry was answered, and, standing still, the native seeming perfectly to understand the reason of the proceeding, presently two dogs came bounding towards us through the trees; and in a little time, the bulky form of my kangaroo-skin friend, Crab, and the blue jacket of the shepherd were visible to us in the distance. They soon joined us.

"What luck?" said the farmer.

"I think I've found the tracks," said the shepherd; "but I suppose we shall be sure now, as I see you've got one of the natives to guide you. I saw a smoke over the hills, and thought it was likely there was a mob of 'em about. Well, master, we had better put the black fellow on the track that I've found, and then he can go right ahead."

The black man, however, refused to proceed in any other than his own way, and continued to lead us straight to some spot that he seemed to have fixed on as a favourable starting point.

"I suppose we have nothing to do but to follow him?" said the shepherd.

"Follow him!" said Crab, who had hitherto continued silent. "Follow him! Now, isn't it a pretty thing to see us following a black fellow, to find a whole flock of sheep that's been driven off in the night? Here's a country to live in! A man lies down in his bed with a flock of sheep in his yard, and when he gets up the next morning he finds all his sheep driven off the Lord knows where! And then he must get a black fellow to find them for him! Well, if this won't make a man sick of the country, I don't know what will. What do you think of it, master?" turning to me; "you came out to look for land, and now you are looking for sheep; and you'll find about as much of one as the other, I'm thinking."

It was very odd—but I must confess the truth, the excitement that had taken possession of me had put out of my head my own particular business, that of looking for a piece of land to settle on; and I found myself embarked in an expedition with the New Norfolk settler after his lost sheep, with as much keenness and eagerness

as if it was an affair of my own; so apt are we all to be acted on more by the pressing and immediate circumstance than by the distant consideration. But I felt I was in for it, for better or worse, and that I was bound in honour to go through with it. I could not help, however, letting the thoughts that came across me break out in words to my New Norfolk acquaintance.

"Well," said I, "I did not contemplate this sort of fun when I came to New Norfolk; I came to look for land, and now, it seems, I'm turned sheep-hunter—or sheep-finder; but I suppose this is a part of the usual adventurous life of a settler?"

"I'll tell you what, my friend," said the farmer, "I am much obliged to you for your company and assistance in this matter, and the more so, because it was done readily and good naturedly; but if you want to see the country, you could not have a better opportunity than this; for you are very certain to be led a pretty dance before we have done, and that over parts of the country that neither you nor I perhaps would think of penetrating into, unless compelled by the necessity of following the track. So don't suppose you are losing time; rather you are gaining time, for you are seeing, if you will make use of your eyes, more of the country than most strangers do."

"Well," said I, "I was told before I set out, that a settler's life was one of adventure; and this is a pretty good beginning."

We had now arrived at the margin of a little rivulet, of which there are many in this country, a foot or two broad, and of the depth of a few inches only. The native paused here, and seemed to ponder for a while.

Not being used to the bush, I had no notion where we were, and I felt, for the first time, how easily those unaccustomed to the bush get bewildered. There was the sun to go by, to be sure, and we could see it—and feel it too. But wandering in the bush, and becoming lost in it, seems to produce some specific emotion of the mind, by which the faculties become actually stupefied and the wits lost. But I shall have to speak of this in another place. The black fellow soon made up his mind; pointing backwards and shaking his head, to signify that the sheep were not in that direction, he continued his way to the left, keeping near the little rivulet, and searching, as I observed by his eye, for the tracks of the sheep. We continued in this line for some miles, till we began to feel tired. Crab called a halt.

“This seems to be rather a wild goose chase. Here we have followed this black rascal for I don’t know how many miles, and not the tail of a sheep have we seen—and in my opinion never shall; for I’m quite sure he’s only leading us to a proper place for a mob of these devils to set on us, and devour us—the Lord help us! To think that this should be the end of my mother’s son! To be eaten up by those black villains—just chucked on the fire, and before we’re half done, to have them set their teeth in us. Well, to be sure! master, what do you think of it? I’m for going back again before it comes to worse.”

“Go back!” said the shepherd; “never think of it. We must come on the tracks some time. Why? you would never go back without the sheep! Three hundred and fifty sheep must leave their marks behind them.”

"But they don't," said Crab.

"Come on," said the farmer, motioning to the native to move forward. "It would be a pretty joke to go back without any of the flock. Ah! the black fellow has got scent of them—see, he is pointing to something on the ground."

We now hastily followed the native, who, after rapidly continuing on the track, suddenly stopped, and seemed to require some information, which he did not know how to ask for.

"Go to him, Dick," said the farmer; "you know their ways better than we do. Try to make out what he wants."

The shepherd approached the native. The native pointed to the tracks.

"Sheep," said he.

"Sheep, sure enough," said the shepherd; "but he means something that I can't make out."

The native now, throwing his arms about so as to describe a large space of land, said in an inquiring tone, "Sheep? sheep? sheep?"

"Ah!" said Dick, "I see what he's at now; he wants to know if there were many sheep; he has come upon fresh tracks, but only of a few, and he fears being led away after the wrong lot." "Many," said he to the native; "little," pointing to the present tracks and shaking his head. The native, it seems, understood him, for he immediately turned off at an angle to his left, and in about a couple of miles we crossed the track of a number of sheep, which we now found had been driven parallel to the river for some distance; the sheep-stealers then turned sharply to the left, and crossed a part of the river

where it was easily fordable. On the other side of the river the tracks were plain and fresh, and we proceeded at a rapid pace in pursuit. We continued our course for several miles, when the tracks suddenly assumed the appearance of a fork, part towards the right and part towards the left.

In this dilemma it was resolved that the farmer, with the shepherd and the native, should proceed to the left, and that I and Crab should follow the track to the right, and act according to circumstances. To this arrangement Crab made no objection, as there was "as good a chance," he said, "of finding them one way as another, although he had no doubt they had been driven away by this time where nobody would find them; and if they were found, so changed that nobody could know them, as they would be all fresh marked and firebranded." And so we parted on our respective expeditions.

I afterwards learned that the New Norfolk man recovered nearly all his sheep, but I shall not stop here to relate the particulars. I want to show how I got on my farm, and by what means a settler arrives through difficulties and dangers to independence and fortune.

"Well, master," said Crab, "you have seen something of the country now; what do you think of it?"

"It's a beautiful country to look at," said I; "but beauty of scenery is one thing, and goodness of land is another. A settler can't live on a fine prospect; he must get his living out of the fatness of the soil under his foot; but just at this moment, Master Crab," continued I, "I would rather look on a good breakfast than anything else."

"In that case," said Crab, stopping and speaking softly, "you have a chance of something—look there,

just over that log of a tree—don't you see his head? It's a brush kangaroo. There, he's hopping off; now you've a good shot at him."

I fired, and the animal gave a bound forward.

"You've hit him," said Crab; and, tired as we were, we set off at a run after the wounded kangaroo.

The animal, however, hopped away at an amazing rate, and it continued its course for more than a mile before it fell. Crab quickly cut it up, and lighting a fire of the dead wood which lay in plenty about, we made a bush breakfast and dinner all in one. The water of a spring close by supplied drink; and Crab armed himself with the tail of the defunct, as a supply, as he said, against accidents.

The chase of the kangaroo caused us to lose the track of the sheep, and Crab proposed that we should cross over the country till we came to the high road uniting the two extremities of the island. I assented to this scheme, and after a toilsome march of thirty hours, we found ourselves on the main road. A settler's bullock-cart fortunately was proceeding to Norfolk Plains, on the northern side of the island. We availed ourselves of its convenience; and partly riding and partly walking, we arrived at the large tract of level land known by that name. From thence we proceeded to Launceston, and returning by the high road, we arrived at a place called "Green Ponds," in the district of Murray. Here, at a little public house, newly set up, I heard of a tract of country lying westward, on the banks of the Clyde, particularly suitable for cattle and sheep feeding, which was the line I had a mind to follow. I crossed over, with the persevering Crab, and lighted on a spot, which pleased

me at once, from the back run for sheep and cattle which it afforded.

Having fixed on my land, I hastened back to Hobart Town, that I might be the first to apply for it. I had been away seventeen days, and it was with not a little delight that I saw my wife and children again, for I seemed to have been absent a much longer time. The very next day I got an order from the governor to take possession; and I was informed the land would be regularly surveyed and marked out for me by the government surveyor, as soon as his engagements would permit, and that in the meantime I might take possession and erect my buildings. My next care was to provide myself with two bullock-carts, and two teams of four bullocks each, to carry up such utensils and things as were absolutely necessary.

On consulting with my wife, I found that she preferred going on the land with me at once, with the children, to staying in the town until I had got some accommodation for her. Fortunately we had brought out with us two good tents, one a pretty large one; these served us in good stead. We were in a pretty bustle, it may be supposed, packing up and getting ready for our journey. It was about fifty miles from the town to the spot I had chosen. All our goods and traps being ready—and having had assigned to me two government men, a bullock-driver, and a farming-man—my wife, her children, and her mother, occupying one cart, with the woman servant, and all sorts of articles for bedding and use; and the other cart being filled with utensils, and tools, and provisions, we commenced our journey on the 26th of February, 1817, with anxious thoughts, but full of spirits and of hope, for the river Clyde.

Chapter Sixth.

Journey up the Country with Family, Bullock-carts, and Crab—A Steep Hill—A Night in the Bush—Arrives at his Land—His First Chop at a Gum Tree.

It is more than twenty-one years since I set out on this memorable journey, but the whole scene is present to me as if it was an affair of yesterday; and I remember well my sensations at the sight of my wife perched on the top of a feather bed in a bullock-cart, with her old mother sitting beside her, and the children higgledy-piggledy about her, enjoying the novelty and the fun of being dragged by bullocks in a cart. There was something so droll in the set-out, and at the same time the occasion was so serious, that my poor wife did not know whether to laugh or to cry; but the tumblings that the roughness of the road gave the children soon made them merry enough, and their joyous mirth set the rest of the party a-laughing, so that the journey was a merry one—in the beginning at least. The old lady sat very quietly in her place, a little frightened, but resigned to her fate. She owned, afterwards, that she never expected to get to the end of the journey alive by such an outlandish sort of conveyance, and she was like to be right in her forebodings, at one time.

We got on very well till we arrived at the ferry, for many years known as Stocker's Ferry, about nine miles from camp. The bullocks behaved admirably. These

were all fine animals. I gave forty pounds a pair for two pair. The other two pair I got for thirty-five pounds a pair; but one of the bullocks was rather old and weak, but a steady worker, and a prime fellow to break in the young ones; it seemed to me he took a pleasure in it. Bob, who lived with me for many years afterwards, had the honour of conducting the principal team, the first cart being committed to the care of my other servant. I walked, helping the one or the other, as the occasion happened, with Will, my eldest boy, now nearly ten years old, for my companion. We had not gone more than a mile from the town, when we heard some one calling after us, and who should it be but Crab, who joined us, terribly out of breath, and with an uncertain expression of countenance which represented an odd appearance of habitual sourness and present concern, which induced me to stop the whole cavalcade for a moment, wondering what could be the matter.

"Well, Mr. Crab," said I, "nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing wrong yet that I see," said Crab; "but I'm thinking, master," said he, hesitatingly, "you're rather short-handed for what you're about. You see, when one of the bullock-carts turns over, you'll hardly be strong enough to set it on its legs again. . . ."

"Oh, gracious! Mr. Crab," said my wife, "don't make things worse than they are; you will always look on the worst side so."

"Why, ma'am," said Crab, trying to look gracious, "I don't like to frighten the ladies; but it's always best to be prepared for what's to happen, then when it comes it isn't so bad. So I thought I might be able to help you a bit, as I'm used to the ways of the country, and

see you safe on your land; and I don't doubt that when you get there, you'll be glad enough to get back again; and then it would be a consolation to me to see you safe in the town again, and aboard ship, so that you may go away home from this horrible place, which it's a shame to entice people to—poor, deceived, wretched, miserable creatures! Besides, I've taken a sort of liking to your good man here, and the long and the short of it is, if you like, I'll go along with you to your land, and lend you a help, for you'll want it bad enough. What do you say to it, master?"

There was a real good and honest feeling in the man, which, in spite of the rough husk that covered it, had given me a liking for him, and I readily agreed to his proposal; telling him that I was heartily glad of such a valuable addition to our company. He gave a nod, to intimate that he considered the social compact as concluded, and then eagerly relapsed into his accustomed sourness and sarcasm. He immediately began to complain of the state of the roads, of their ruts and unevenness.

"Did ever mortal man," said he, "conceive the stupidity of these road-makers? Here they take you right over the hill, when it would have been no further, and much easier, to go round it. But no—the road must be carried in a straight line, and so the poor cattle must be murdered in dragging their loads over it. And then look at the stumps of trees left in the middle of the road. A nice place, isn't it, for a gentleman to travel in?"

"But you can't expect," said I, "to find things in a new country all ready made to your hand; there must be a beginning to everything."

"Then why do you come to a new country? Why can't you wait till it's an old one, and fit for Christians to live in? Not that this place will ever be fit for anything to live in but a convict or a kangaroo."

By this time we had arrived at Stocker's Ferry.

"What do you intend to do now?" said Crab.

"Cross the ferry."

"How?"

"How! why in the ferry boat, to be sure."

"You'll be capsized—bullocks, carts, and all."

"We must take our chance of that."

After a good deal of trouble, we crossed over safe.

"Well, Crab, that job's done well," said I.

"Better the other way, and so saved worse," said Crab; "but, however, as we are on this side, heaven help us! we had better get on to where there is water for the bullocks, for they begin to be distressed in the heat of the day. They'll never be able to get these loads to the end of the journey; that's my opinion."

With these pleasing prognostications as an accompaniment to our toil, we reached Brighton Plains, where we made a halt, in a sheltered spot, by the side of a little stream, and let loose the bullocks to graze. Crab assured us that we might make up our minds to stay where we were for some weeks, or days at least, as the bullocks would be sure to stray away into the bush.

We laughed at his talk; and the children, glad to be released from the confinement of the cart, made the little valley ring with their shrieks and their merriment. My wife was as merry as any of them; and the old lady was pleased to have proceeded so far, and to have accomplished the much dreaded crossing of the river without

accident. I thought even the furrows of Crab's rugged features once or twice nearly relaxed into a smile, as he witnessed the frolicsome mirth of the children, but he shook his head with much gravity—"Ah," said he, "poor things! let them enjoy themselves; they little know what's in store for 'em."

We now called a council of war, and it was determined to wait till the cool of the evening, and then make a vigorous push for the Green Ponds, where a little public house had been recently established. We arrived there just at dark; and as the house was small, and the night fine and warm, we preferred passing the night under our tents, which were quickly set up. We secured the bullocks in a small stock-yard, close by the little inn; and with the exception of Crab, the whole party was soon fast asleep. That indefatigable individual insisted that we should be attacked by the bush-rangers; and he remained therefore on watch to give the alarm.

Nothing occurred, however; and by four o'clock in the morning, we were all a-foot, and ready to start. We proceeded in due order for about four miles on the high road. We had then to turn to the left, westward, on our way to the place of our destination. Crossing the narrow river Jordan at an awkward ford, which would have been of difficult accomplishment at any other than the summer season, we continued our way with much precaution, as there was no marked road, and the track was not always very plain.

After a few miles progress, we arrived at the foot of the Den Hill—part of a ridge of mountainous hills, extending to the left. On the right was a smiling valley, watered by a little stream. The appearance of the ascent

before us was very formidable ; it is not very much better now ; but at that time the country was little known, and an untravelled road always appears, the first time, longer and worse than it is. Here we made another halt, to gather up courage to face the ascent, and to recruit the strength of the cattle and their drivers. Crab looked at the hill covered with a thick mass of trees, and without any visible opening, and then at the carts and bullocks, with a very long face. I confess I had some misgivings myself. I had gone over the hill before, when I went to look at the land at the Clyde ; but going over such a hill on foot, and surmounting it with laden carts, are two very different things.

As we discussed some bread and meat on the grass, we were all very serious, even the children regarding the black, dense mass of trees rising one above another before us with fearfulness and perplexity. We turned to Crab instinctively, expecting to hear from him some of his usual evil prognostications. But he preserved a rigid silence, stuffing huge pieces of damper into his mouth, with a diligence and perseverance that seemed to imply he was doubtful when he might have the chance of doing so again, and enjoying maliciously, I was inclined to think, the novel disappointment of his unusual taciturnity.

At last, seeing that the thing must be done, I shook off the lethargic feeling which fatigue, the heat, and apparently insurmountable difficulties before us had cast over me, and I braced myself up for the effort. We got on pretty well for about a quarter of a mile, but the steepness of the way and the impediments of the dead timber, lying on all sides about, brought us to a stand-

still. Putting pieces of wood behind the wheels of the carts, to prevent their rolling backwards, we looked inquiringly at one another. It seemed a hopeless task. Crab said nothing. The men looked at the bullocks despairingly.

"It's more than mortal cattle can do," said Bob, who had shown himself a civil and diligent fellow; "you might as well attempt to climb up the walls of a house."

I thought so too, but I took care to keep my thoughts to myself. I was puzzled to know what to do; and the evening was drawing in, and the clear light failing us, though at that time of the year the nights are never quite dark in Van Diemen's Land. In this difficulty my wife came to our aid.

"If four bullocks cannot draw one cart up the hill, why not put the whole eight on, and draw one cart up at a time?"

It was like Columbus's egg; nothing more easy when it was done. In a trice we unharnessed the provision cart, Crab lending himself with alacrity and energy to the movement; and with prodigious labour, and the exhaustion of the whole party, we succeeded, after two hours' work, in dragging the cart, with my wife and children, to the summit of this terrible hill. It was now nearly dark, and we had left the provision-cart about a mile behind us, and the animals were too much exhausted to render further attempts possible. Under these circumstances, we were obliged to pass the night, as it were, under arms, with the bullocks yoked and chained, for we were afraid to let them wander to feed, not knowing the country. Crab volunteered to mount guard over the cart below, and to keep up a good fire to

point out his whereabouts. We did the same; and in this way we passed the night, not very commodiously; but the genial warmth of the season, and the brilliant fineness of the night, reconciled us to our rough lodgment, and as we had plenty of covering for the children, they slept soundly, and all passed off well.

At the first sign of light we were stirring. We had to pursue the same process to get up our provision-cart, when we made a hearty breakfast, and not the less so from having gone without our supper. Our way was now all downhill by a gentle inclination; and sometimes following the faint track, and sometimes guided by the notched trees, and making our way over the dead timber and through the bushes as well as we could, we arrived in about a couple of hours at the site of my future farm.

It was now noon. The sun was intensely hot, and we very tired, bullocks and all; but we had arrived safe, and we felt in spirits. And here we were, our little party, alone in the wilderness. To the west there was no human habitation between us and the sea; and the nearest settler's residence was not less than eighteen miles. There was pasturage for sheep and cattle for scores and scores of miles, and no one to interfere with them. But I had not yet a single sheep, nor a single head of cattle, except my eight working bullocks. We turned them out to graze on the plain before us, through which ran the Clyde, then better known by the name of the Fat Doe River; we had no fear of their straying, for they were tired enough with their journey. The two men then set up the tents without bidding.

I remember I sat on a fallen tree, with my wife and

children and her mother stretched on the ground in the shade, for some time absorbed in thoughts of mingled pain and pleasure. Crab had strolled into the bush. It was a brilliant day. There was a solemn stillness around that was imposing; the sun shining gloriously in the heavens, and the prospect around most calm and beautiful. I felt melancholy. Thoughts crowded thick upon me. I had undertaken a vast task, to establish a home in the wilderness. The first stage of my enterprise I had accomplished; through toil, and labour, and difficulty, and danger; but I had accomplished it. The first object was gained. I had reached the land of promise. I had taken possession of my land, and a noble domain it was. But what were the risks and difficulties that remained? I felt fearful at the work before me. No help near in case of danger; no medical assistance; no neighbour. I looked at my wife and children lying listlessly on the dry and parched grass; I looked around me, and tried to penetrate into the obscurity of the future and guess the end. Worn out with thought, and weary with travel, I insensibly gave way to the feeling of lassitude which possessed us all, and fell asleep on the grass. My wife would not have me wakened, but taking on herself, without hesitation and without delay, the duties of a settler's wife, she silently gave directions for unloading the carts, and preparing our canvass house. The smaller tent she made the temporary storehouse for our multifarious goods; the larger one was converted into a general bedchamber for herself, her mother, and the children. The store tent was destined for me to sleep in. Two boxes formed a table on the outside, and fitting logs of wood formed appropriate seats. A fire

was kindled near the spot, and dinner got ready. It was quite an early settler's meal; boiled salt pork and damper, with tea and brown sugar, and rice for the children. All this was prepared while I slept. I was awakened by Crab, who had been absent about a couple of hours on his exploring expedition.

"Holloa!" said he; "here's a pretty settler, to go to sleep while his wife works for him. Look here, I've got something for you."

I awoke at this, and felt quite refreshed and ready for action. Crab displayed a brace of wild ducks, which produced a general curiosity among the party. Without stopping to ask questions, Crab prepared them for the spit after his way. But spit we had none, so we contented ourselves with throwing them on the hot embers, native fashion, and hooking them out with the ramrod of one of our muskets. We distributed them among young and old in equitable proportions. I had brought up with me a five gallon cask of rum, rather in compliance with the customs of the colony than with my own inclination; but on this occasion, and to do honour to the splendour of our repast of game, I served out a moderate ration of it, much to the satisfaction of the two men, who were well pleased at the unexpected libation. We soon got very merry, and at last felt so reconciled to our new position, that I caught myself proposing three-times-three to the success of the FIRST FARM on the Fat Doe River.

And now, having rested and refreshed, we all began to bestir ourselves in earnest to our work. My eldest boy, Will, was set to watch the bullocks, to prevent their straying too far. The men busied themselves in erecting a sod hut for themselves about a hundred yards from the

tents. Crab got out the grindstone, fixed it on a convenient stump of a fallen tree, and prepared the axes. My first care was to put our fire-arms in order, and handy for use. I had two muskets with bayonets, a fowling-piece, and two pair of pistols, one a large pair of horse-pistols; I had besides a yeomanry broad-sword and a hanger, so that we were tolerably well armed. Crab looked grim at my warlike preparations.

"Ah!" said he, "a pretty way of taking possession of a farm, with guns and blunderbusses, instead of ploughs and harrows. Well, to be sure; the madness of the people to come to such a place as this to fight with the natives and the bush-rangers. However, as you are here, I suppose something must be done to get a roof over your heads. I have found some capital timber not a quarter of a mile off, that would do to build a log-house. You'll find that the best thing you can do, is to house yourself comfortably;—comfortably! yes, pretty comfort there is in the bush! we look very comfortable, don't we? all alone in the wilderness, without a soul near us to help us, and not a drop of beer to be had for love or money. Well, as you have made your bed you must lie on it. You are in for it for a while, and so I suppose you must make the best of it."

With these appropriate and gratifying observations, the cross-grained, but diligent Crab, furnished himself with the heaviest axe of the lot, and we went together, to the verge of the forest; our encampment having been formed on a piece of ground nearly clear of timber. We eyed some hard looking gum trees for a little time, pausing to select those most fit for our purpose.

"Now," said Crab, "who is to strike the first stroke?"

"That will I do," said I, and fetching a blow at a gum tree before me, struck my axe in the bark.

"Well done for a beginning," said Crab; "here goes for another."

At this he struck a sturdy stroke on the other side of the tree, but without producing much impression.

"Hard stuff this," said Crab. "I'm thinking we have harder work before us than we thought for! I wonder how long it will take you and me to cut down this tree? but let us at him again."

We chopped, and chopped, and sweated, and worked till we were fairly exhausted; we made a pretty decent gap on both sides, but the tree gave no intimation of coming down.

"This will never do," said I; "there must be something wrong here; we must not be all day cutting down one tree."

"Casting my eye on the axes that lay on the ground, it occurred to me that the fault was in the tools. We had made use of heavy, broad axes, which after experience taught us were quite unfit for felling timber.

"There's something wrong with these axes," said I; "let's try the axes which I bought in camp."

They were much longer from heel to edge, and much narrower, presenting not more than half the breadth of edge to the wood. The first cut showed their superiority.

"This is the article," said Crab; and with that he gave a flourish with his axe in the air, and shivered off a prodigious slice of the obstinate gum-tree. We went at it merrily, and presently the tree began to shiver, and suddenly it fell down with a prodigious crash to the ground.

"That's number one," said Crab, "and precious hard work it is, I must say. And this is what we have come to t'other side of the earth for! to cut down gum trees! A nice employment for middle aged gentlemen, I must say. I'm thinking we might have had enough of this pleasure at home, without coming so far for it. However, every one to his mind. And now for the next, master. Here is a good looking chap; let's have a chop at him."

"Let us try the saw," said I; "it's ready set, perhaps that will do it easier."

"Any way," said Crab, "so long as we are amused. I take it, in about six months at this rate, we shall be able to get timber enough for a hut. But here's a nice breeze got up. Oh, this is what they call the sea-breeze that comes in the afternoon; but sure we are too far from the sea to feel it."

"Well, never mind where it comes from; it's too pleasant to be asked questions about. Upon my word I thought it was rather warmish."

The wind now rose so as to bend the branches of the trees, and its grateful coolness was unspeakably refreshing, after the sultry heat of the day. I saw the tents agitated by it, and the loose things on the grass dancing about, and the children merrily chasing them. But I found the breeze more than pleasing; it was a useful help in felling the trees, and we quickly took advantage of it. Cutting the side of the tree next to the breeze, we found that the force of the wind saved us half our labour, for the branches being full and thick in leaf, they presented such a hold to the wind, that a slight notching of them brought them down. In this way we felled eight trees,

and gave the appearance of a little clearing to that spot.

In the meantime the evening was drawing in, and the shades of night soon fell on us. The men had raised the walls of their sod hut, and covering it over with branches of trees, they were content for the night. The bullocks showed no disposition to stray; so, after seeing all things put in order as well as the circumstances permitted, we disposed ourselves for rest. Crab insisted on keeping watch with musket and fixed bayonet; and with a cartouch-box slung behind him, he made a most formidable figure.

All was still; the stars were bright in the heavens, and I could distinguish the faint outlines of the distant hills. It was long before I could compose myself to sleep. I was full of thought and anxiety. I had everything to do; mine was really a beginning. The soil around me had not been disturbed by civilized man since its creation. The vast wilderness seemed to have received us into its ample bosom, and to have closed around us, shutting us out from all communication with humanity. We formed but a little speck on the vast space of the uninhabited country. I endeavoured to picture to myself the future farms that might arise around us, and the coming of neighbours to cheer and strengthen us. But the reality was too present and too strong to admit of the consolations of the imagination. I felt committed to an act of doubt and difficulty. I revolved my past life in England, and wondered how any state of misfortune could have been urgent enough to induce me to embark in so fearful an undertaking as that of a settler's life in the wilderness. But the very

peril of my position served at last to nerve me up to the encounter. I felt the deep responsibility of my position as the father of a young family, and the husband of an affectionate wife, who, by my act, had been conveyed from home, from relations and from early friends, to brave the risks and adventures of a settler's life.

With the serious thoughts with which this contemplation inspired me, I lay down to rest, not without returning my grateful thanks to the Great Disposer of all events, for having arrived thus far with my family in health and safety, and entreating the Divine protection and help in my solitary encampment; with such prayer I addressed myself to sleep to gather strength for the morrow.

Chapter Seventh.

A Settler's daily labours—Chopping down gum-trees tough work—
Builds a Log-house—Buys some Sheep—Shoots a wild animal—
Black cockatoo-pie—A Kangaroo steamer.

Thursday, February 28th, 1817.—Up at daylight. Set the men to work to cross-cut the trees that we felled yesterday. Crab helped, and they sawed and felled alternately. Crab said it was regular nigger work; when they were tired of chopping down the gum-trees, they had to set to to saw 'em—to rest themselves!

* * * * *

Walked over my land; guessing, as well as I could, the extent of twelve hundred acres, at the rate of one-third frontage to the river. Fixed on the line where the measurement of my lot should begin. After a good deal of consideration and examination of the parts about, I settled on the spot for building our log-house. I thought that the time might come when I should be able to erect a better house, so I marked the place for our temporary habitation close to the spot for the future building, and so as to form a part of the general plan. Marked out in my mind a garden and entrance. After this I set to work to help Crab and the men in preparing split logs for the hut. My wife says she doesn't like me to call it a "hut;" so, mem., "to call it a COTTAGE." Got twelve more trees down to-day. My eldest boy, Will, who had been watching the working

bullocks within sight of the tents, told us at dinner that he had seen a kangaroo, with a young one in her pouch, grazing not far from him. I must get dogs, not only for hunting occasionally, but for safety, to give the alarm at night, and in the day-time too. The weather beautiful. We live in the open air, and it seems to me it would not harm us to sleep in the open air; but we have our tents. No one came near us all day.

Friday, March 1.—At work all day with Crab and the men, sawing the fallen timber into lengths and splitting it to set up. Crab has been splitting shingles to serve instead of tiles for the roof. Bob said that many huts are thatched with a sort of grass, abundant in all marshy places, and which serves the purpose of straw pretty well; but I don't like the idea of having a combustible roof where you are exposed to fire, as well from the natives as from the accidental firing of the dry grass in the summer season; so, although it is more labour and more expense, I have decided against thatch. Had the shingles split ten inches long and four broad. Only cut four more trees. Saw no one all day.

Sunday, March 3.—Could not make up my mind at first what to do, whether to go on with our cottage, which was a pressing want, or to keep the Sunday as a day of rest. Consulted with my wife. She thought it was proper to keep up the distinction of the Sunday for the sake of preserving the good habits of the children. Pondered over the matter a good deal. As to there being any harm in working on a Sunday on such matters as we were engaged, I did not think there was; but as the weather was fine, I thought it best not to disturb Sunday habits. So after we had read prayers to the

children, we passed the day talking, and planning, and strolling among the trees, but not far from the house. And I don't think there was any time lost, after all ; for our day's rest made us the fresher and stronger for Monday's work. As I am upon this subject, I may say here, that in my experience I never knew any harm come to a man's constitution from working the six days of the week as hard as he might, if he rested on the seventh. But I have observed that when a man in his eagerness has worked every day without taking his rest on the seventh, it has worn him out, and that he has become used up much sooner than the man who rested one day in the week. And this remark holds good, as I have had occasion to know, with those who worked with their heads as well as with those who worked with their hands. Saw no one all day. No Sunday visitors here.

Monday.—Began setting up the logs to form the walls of the house. House to be sixty feet long and sixteen broad, and the logs nine feet out of the ground ; to be divided into one large room, twenty feet long ; a passage ten feet wide ; and on the other side of the passage four rooms, one to be a store-room. At the end of the passage, facing the entrance, a closet for all sorts of things. At the back of the long room of twenty feet, a skillion, to serve as a kitchen, &c.

When I showed the plan to Crab, he said, " I should never live to finish it ; however, I might go on building it till I left, and he would not balk my humour if I had a fancy for it."

4 *Saturday.*—More chopping and sawing.

Sunday.—Passed as before.

Monday, March 11.—Hard at work at the house, and

all the week; put the logs in the ground two feet deep; got all the shingles split for the roof.

Tuesday, March 19.—The cottage presents a respectable appearance. Shingled it over as far as the long room, then stopped for want of shingle nails. We had not had fresh meat since we got on the land, and my wife thought the children were not thriving. Arranged to send the bullock-cart to camp for a fresh supply of nails and flour, and to bring up as much as it could carry of our goods from the merchant's store—Crab to go, with one man.

Wednesday.—Saw the cart off. We all felt very lonely. We did not lose time, however, but finished odd things about that wanted attending to.

Thursday, March 21.—Took my gun, to see if I could bring down some ducks, to make a fresh meal for the children; for we had been living on the salt pork we had brought up with us. Tried to keep the tents and new building in sight, but was led further than I intended. Came up to a lot of ducks swimming leisurely about at a part of the river that was very deep, with the current not so rapid as in the shallow parts. I was going to have a shot at about twenty of them, when suddenly a gun was fired into the midst of them, close to me. I was in a terrible fright—the suddenness of the report, and its unexpectedness, filling me at the moment, with all sorts of fears. My first impulse was to run home to my wife and children; and then the thought occurred that I should be exposed and defenceless that way, to be shot at, if there was any one of a mind to do it.

All these thoughts passed through my head in an in-

stant; and in the meanwhile, the man who had fired the shot advanced rapidly through the shrubs after his game. As he came on, his eyes lighted on me with my gun cocked, and pointed towards him. I saw at once by his manner that he was as much frightened at me as I was at him. The Fat Doe River at this place is about forty feet across: he was on the other side. There we stood for a little while, he stopping and gaping, and I standing with my piece in the position to fire. How long we should have remained in these positions, each in fear of the other, I can't pretend to say; but the suspense ended by a flock of ducks that came flying between us, just over our heads. The ducks were so close, they looked so plump as I stood under them, and I wanted them so much, that I could not resist the temptation. By a sort of instinct, for I was always fond of sporting, I raised up my piece, and forgetting my usual caution, I let fly at them. Down came three.

"Well done!" cried out the stranger; "I see there's no harm in you, or you would not have flung your fire that way; but you'll loose your ducks, if you don't mind; there are two in the water sailing down the stream."

I soon found a long rod, with which I secured my birds; and the stranger going further down the stream, recovered the four which he had shot before me.

"I suppose you took me for a bush-ranger?" bawled I, speaking to him as he was standing and holding his wet ducks by the legs, on the other side of the narrow stream.

"I did not like the looks of you, as you stood with your gun pointed at me as you did; that's just the way of 'em. I suppose you're looking for land?"

"I have found my land, and I'm on it, not a quarter of a mile from here. What are you doing?"

"I have got charge of a stock-yard, about fifteen miles off, and I'm going my rounds to see how the cattle lie."

"Cattle! I wish I had known there were cattle hereabouts; I should have been glad of some of the fresh meat. I've seen none near us. But, to be sure, I have never left my tents before to-day, to go as far as this even. But we can talk as we go home; they are waiting for me, and glad enough will they be at what I am bringing them."

With this we proceeded homewards, till we came to the part of the stream where a tree had fallen across, which served as a bridge for the stock-keeper to come over to me. When we got to the tents, he went, as a matter of course, to the men's sod-hut, where Bob did the honours; this relieved me from a little embarrassment, for I did not know on what footing to treat the stock-keeper. After a while Bob appeared with the stranger's four ducks, saying that he would be glad of salt pork instead, as it would be a treat to him.

Friday, March 22.—The stock-keeper slept in Bob's hut. I found that he had two kangaroo dogs for sale, a dog and a bitch—asked twelve dollars each for them. Thought it a large sum, but after some explanation agreed to give it. To bring the dogs on Tuesday.

Saturday, March 23.—Tried my hand with Bob at making a table. Took some of the cleanest of the split logs, and splitting them again, contrived, by smoothing them with the axe, and planing them where possible, to produce a tolerably even surface. It was six feet long, and four wide. My wife praised my ingenuity, and her

mother declared it was a splendid piece of furniture. The children were very merry at it, and Betsy, my eldest girl, who was christened after her grandmother, covered it with an old green cloth, that had served to pack things in, which gave it quite a genteel look.

We were all abed and asleep, when we were awakened by a prodigious cracking of whips and sounds of voices in the distance. We were agreeably surprised by the arrival of the bullock-cart, with Crab and the man, bearing fresh supplies and additions to our stores, for we did not expect him till next day.

Sunday, 24.—Passed as usual. Crab says he has seen a fine lot of sheep—one hundred and eighty ewes with their lambs, and forty wethers, to be had cheap for money, near the Green Ponds. Thought of the sheep all night, but could not plan how to keep them without another servant.

Monday, 25.—Found that John Bond, one of my government men, had been used to sheep in England. Determined to have a look at the sheep next day, but very reluctant to leave home.

Tuesday, 26.—Crab and Bob set to work to complete the shingling of the cottage. Seeing the importance of beginning to get stock about me, and of taking advantage of cheap sales, I started off at daylight with John Bond to the Green Ponds. Arrived there at mid-day; examined the sheep, bought the whole lot at 10s. 6d. a head, that is, reckoning the ewe and lamb as one. The lambs are about five months old. This comes to four hundred and sixty-two dollars, dollars passing for five shillings, which cost me four shillings and fourpence in London.

They were large carcassed sheep, partaking more of the Leicestershire breed than any other; their wool far from fine, but not positively coarse. These one hundred and eighty ewes formed the basis of my future flocks, of the rise of which I shall have to speak in the proper place. I paid for the sheep by an order for so much money in camp. When I had bought them, the next thing was how to get them home. I and my man drove them to the foot of the Den Hill that evening, and then letting them feed in the valley, they rested quietly where they were when the day closed.

We kept watch and watch all night. About the middle of the night the sheep became very restless, and I wondered what was the matter, and was easily alarmed, being in constant apprehension of bush-rangers and natives. I had my gun ready, and listened attentively; I could hear nothing but my man snoring. Presently I thought I heard a sort of snuffing, as of some animal, and peering through the dark, I thought I saw an outline different from that of a sheep, and standing by itself. I knew there were no wild animals in the country that would attack man, but I felt a little queerish at the appearance of the shadowy form of a creature which I took to be the native dog, as I had heard it called in camp. I was curious to know what it was, and, prompted by that feeling of using the gun which grows with one in the bush, I fired. The whole flock roused up at this, and my man awoke directly. I told him what I had done, and when we had settled the sheep down again, we went to the spot, and found an animal killed and warm.

When the daylight came, I found I had killed a sort of animal peculiar to the country, as all animals are in

90 ARRIVE AT HOME WITH MY SHEEP.

Van Diemen's Land. It was more like a large wild dog or jackal than anything else; about the size of a Newfoundland dog, but not so thick and heavy; of a brownish colour, and was partly striped and partly spotted like a leopard. It was a female, and possessed the peculiarity attached only to the animals of New South Wales, of the false belly or pouch for containing the young one. I was not naturalist enough to make out to what description of animal the creature belonged, but my friend Mr. Moss, who settled near me some years after, has told me since, that the animal is of the canine genus, and of a species before unknown. My man skinned it for me, and when we got home Betsy covered the stump of a gum-tree with it, and it being elegantly stuffed with dry grass, it formed a seat of honour for my wife.

We lost no time in getting the sheep over the long hill, and then letting them travel leisurely, we reached home with them before noon.

There was a fine stir about the tents when the sheep came in sight. We were welcomed by my wife, and her mother, and the children in a body. Even Crab seemed pleased.

"Well," said he, "here's more company, at any rate. You must look sharp after them, or not a tail will you see to-morrow morning. The sheep in this country are dreadful creatures to stray. And no wonder, poor things! they naturally try to find some grass fit to eat, which they never do, and that makes 'em eternally wandering about. We shall have a pretty job to brand 'em. Where do you mean to mark 'em."

"Why," said I, "I must do as well as I can, for I have no marking-irons."

"No marking-irons! Here's a mess! We must make another journey to town. Only think of travelling fifty or sixty miles, and the same back, after marking-irons, or any little thing that may be wanted. Why, there isn't a blacksmith nearer than camp! Well, I suppose we must make another trip?"

"And no great harm in that," said I; "I don't see the use of putting the plough in the ground yet; it's too late and too early; so we had better take advantage of the leisure, and cart everything up that must be carted."

"Why, you never mean to drag all your goods up here, when you're sure to have to drag them all back again?" said Crab; "for as to staying here, that's out of all question. You'll soon have a visit from the bush-rangers when they smell out there is something to be got; or else the natives will call on you in a friendly way, and make a bonfire of your new house; or else—you'll make a bonfire of it yourself, when you come to be sick of the whole affair, as you soon will."

"We shall see," said I. And so it was settled that the cart should go down next day with Crab and Bob, as we should want the other man to mind the sheep. We turned our little flock into the meadow, where we could see for a mile before us, with only trees enough to make the place look pleasing, like a gentleman's park in England.

The stock-keeper came this afternoon with the two kangaroo dogs, Hector and Fly; I found they were the very same dogs I had met with at New Norfolk. They soon got used to us.

Wednesday, March 27.—Crab went to camp with Bob, and one of the carts, and four bullocks. The stock-

keeper stayed with us to-day to lend a hand to finish the shingling; but my boy was mad to take the dogs out after a kangaroo, and the stock-keeper promised to go with him and show him the sport next morning.

Got on well with the shingling to-day.

Thursday, March 28.—Finished the shingling to-day all but the skillion.

Just after dark, Will came home with his new friend, the stock-keeper, tired enough, and he soon made an end of the remains of a cockatoo-pie. He brought with him the tail of an immense kangaroo as a trophy, while the stock-keeper bore on his shoulders the hind-quarters of another, holding the two hind-legs before him, while the tail was hanging down his back nearly to the ground. I asked what they had done with the kangaroo that Will's tail belonged to, and they said they had left the fore-quarters on the ground, and that they had hoisted up the hind-quarters and the skins on a tree, some six or seven miles from the tents. I thought this a sad waste, but it was the general custom in those times. The women then busied themselves in cooking part of the venison for supper, under the instructions of the stock-keeper, who was an experienced epicure in kangaroo cookery. The tenderest parts, and those most free from the tendons and fibres with which the flesh of the kangaroo abounds, were carefully cut out, and chopped up fine; some slices of salt pork were added to this, and the whole put to steam slowly over the fire.

This national dish of the Van Diemen's Land bush is called a "STEAMER." I think I never ate anything so delicious; we all had a hearty stuff, and the old lady insisted on having the rum introduced, to celebrate, as

she said, Will's first exploit of hunting. The tail was left on the fire in a *Papin's digester*, to make soup for the next day. The soup was better even than the steamer; but I must not anticipate. As we sat round the fire on our logs of wood, enjoying ourselves after the bush fashion, I sitting, as my custom was at that time, with my gun over my arm, for fear of surprises, but feeling more safe since the arrival of the dogs, which in this country act not only as hounds for hunting, but as capital watch-dogs, the ladies were curious to know how Will had contrived to catch the kangaroos, and what sort of sport it was. Will was very tired, but the cockatoo-pie and the steamer had refreshed him, and he soon fired up at the recollection of the sport, and told us what had happened to him. As this was my boy's first expedition, I noted down his description in my journal, thinking it might interest him in after times; and to do it the greater honour, I have made it the subject of a separate chapter.

Chapter Eighth.

A Kangaroo hunt—Description and habits of the animal—Crab dilates on the topsy-turviness of all things animal, vegetable and geographical in Van Diemen's Land.

IT was just light when the stock-keeper called me, and I wasn't long dressing. I took one of the large pistols that father said I might have, and the stock-keeper had a musket, and we had half a damper and a paper of salt, and I had my big hack-knife, and so off we went. I do think Hector knew he was going to have some kangaroo, for he seemed so glad, and licked his chops, and Fly wagged her tail, and the morning was so beautiful; and what do you think, father, the bird that mother likes to hear so much is a magpie! it is indeed, for I saw it, and it's just like an English magpie, only it sings so beautifully. We walked over the plain till we came to the hills; the dogs kept quiet behind us. The stock-keeper said I might see they had been well trained; they kept their heads low, and their tails hanging down behind them, as if they had no life in them; but you should have seen them when they got sight of a kangaroo, didn't they pluck up! We went on till we got about four or five miles from the tents, and then we did not talk, for the kangaroos are startled at the least noise; they are just like hares for that. Then the stock-keeper stood still. He said to the dogs, "Go find;" and then the dogs can-

tered about round us, going farther and farther, till Hector began to smell about very earnestly.

"He has got scent," said the stock-keeper, and so he had, for he galloped off with his nose to the ground, straight ahead. Fly saw him, and she galloped after.

"I think it's a big one," said the stock-keeper, "the dogs seem so warm at it."

I was running after them as fast as I could, when the stock-keeper called after me to stop.

"Stop," said he; "it's of no use for you to run, you could not keep up with them."

"Why, what are we to do?" said I; "if they kill a kangaroo, how can we find it?"

"Wait a bit," said he; "all in good time. If the dogs kill a kangaroo, we shall find him, I'll warrant."

So we waited and waited till I was quite tired; and a good while after, Hector came back quite slowly, as if he was tired, with Fly following after. The stock-keeper looked at his mouth.

"What's that for?" said I.

"To see if he has killed," said he; "look here, his mouth is bloody, and that's come by killing a kangaroo, you may be sure of it."

Then the stock-keeper stood up and said to Hector, "Show;" and then Hector trotted off, not fast, but pretty fast, so that I was obliged to trot too to keep up with him; and he trotted on and on till I was rather tired, I dare say for three miles from where we were at first; and on he went, and we following him, till he brought us to a dead kangaroo, close to a little pool of water. It was a monstrous big one, with such a claw on each of his hind-legs; a claw that would rip up a dog in a moment, or a man too, if he got at him.

"Good dog!" said the stock-keeper, and Hector wagged his tail, and seemed to like to be praised. Then the stock-keeper gave me his gun to hold, and he cut open the kangaroo and gave the inside to the dogs. Then he skinned the upper part down to the loins, and cut the kangaroo in half, and hung it up in a tree, noting the place; the other half he left on the ground; that is, when he went away from the place, for he would not let the dogs have more than a taste of the blood, lest it should spoil their hunting.

"What's to be done now?" said I.

"We'll kill another," said the stock-keeper, "if you are not tired."

I said I was not tired a bit; so after we had rested a little while, we went on again, the dogs following us as at first. We saw plenty of brush kangaroos, but we would not touch them. After we had got a mile or two, the stock-keeper, who had been examining the ground all the way along, said, "I think there are some big ones hereabouts, by the look of the marks;" so he said to the dogs, "Go find," as he had said before. Almost directly, we saw such a large fellow—I'm sure he was six feet high—he looked at us and at the dogs for a moment, and then off he went. My gracious! what hops he did give! he hopped with his two hind-legs, with his fore-legs in the air, and his tail straight out behind him,—and wasn't it a tail!—it was as thick as a bed-post! and this great tail went wag, wag, up and down, as he jumped, and seemed to balance him behind. But Hector and Fly were after him. This time the stock-keeper ran too, for the ground was level and clear of fallen timber, and you could see a good way before you. I had begun to feel a little tired, but I didn't feel tired then. Hop, hop went

the kangaroo, and the dogs after him, and we after the dogs; and we scampered on till I was quite out of breath; and the kangaroo was a good bit before the dogs, when he turned up a hill.

"Now we shall have him," said the stock-keeper; "the dogs will beat him up hill."

I wanted my breath, but I kept up, and we scrambled up the hill, and I thought the dogs would get him; but the kangaroo got to the top of the hill first, and when we got a sight of him, he was bounding down the hill, making such prodigious leaps at every jump, over every thing, that you could'nt believe it, if you did'nt see it. The dogs had no chance with him down hill.

"It's of no use," said the stock-keeper, "for us to try to keep up with him; we may as well stay here. He'll lead the dogs a pretty chase, will that fellow; he's a Boomah, and one of the biggest raseals I ever saw."

So we sat down at the top of the hill, under a gum-tree, and there we sat a long time, I don't know how long, until we saw Hector coming up. The stock-keeper looked at his mouth.

"He has killed," said he; "but he has got a little scratched in the tussle, and so has Fly. That big chap was almost too much for two dogs." Then he said, "Go, show!" and Hector and Fly trotted along straight to where the kangaroo lay, without turning to the right or left, but going over everything, just as if they knew the road quite well. We came to a hollow, and there we saw the kangaroo lying dead. Just as the stock-keeper was going to cut him open, I saw another kangaroo not a hundred yards off.

"There's another," said I; and the dogs, although they had had a hard battle with the kangaroo lying dead, started off directly. Close by us was a large pond of water, like a little lake. The kangaroo was between the dogs and the lake. Not knowing how to get past, I suppose, he hopped right into the lake, and the dogs went after him. He hopped further into the lake, where the water got deeper, and then the dogs were obliged to swim, but they were game, and would not leave their work. When the kangaroo found himself getting pretty deep in the water, he stopped, and turned on the dogs; but he could not use his terrible hind claws, so when one of the dogs made a rise at his throat (they always try to get hold of the throat), he took hold of him with his fore-legs, and ducked him under the water. Then the other dog made a spring at him, and the kangaroo ducked him in the same way.

"Well," said the stock-keeper, "I never saw the like of that before; this is a new game."

And all the while the dogs kept springing at the kangaroo's throat, and the kangaroo kept ducking them under the water. But it was plain the dogs were getting exhausted, for they were obliged to swim and be ducked too, while the kangaroo stood with his head and fore-legs from out of the water.

"This will never do," said the stock-keeper; "he'll drown the dogs soon at this rate." So he took his gun from me, and put a ball in it.

"Now," said he, "for a good shot; I must take care not to hit the dogs."

He put his gun over the branch of a dead tree, and watching his time, he fired, and hit the kangaroo in the

neck, and down it came in the water. He then called off the dogs, and they swam back to us.

"He is such a prime one," said he, "it would be a pity to lose his skin;" so he waded in after him, and dragged him out. "It's a pity," said he, "to lose so much meat, but his hind-quarters would be a bigger load than I should like to carry home; but I must have his skin, and I'll tell you what, young fellow, you shall have his tail, though I'm thinking it's rather more than you can carry home."

This roused me a bit, to think I couldn't carry a kangaroo's tail; so I determined to take it home, if I dropped, though I must say it was so heavy that I was obliged to rest now and then, and the stock-keeper carried it a good part of the way for me.

"What shall we do with the meat?" said I.

"What shall we do with it!" said he; "are you hungry?"

"I believe you," said I.

"Then we'll make a dinner off him," said the stock-keeper.

With that we got together some dry sticks, and made a fire, and the stock-keeper took the ramrod of his musket, and first he cut a slice of the lean off the loins, which he said was the tenderest part, and put the ramrod through it, and then he cut out a bit of fat, and slid it on after the lean, and so on a bit of fat and a bit of lean, till he had put on lots of slices, and so he roasted them over the fire. He gave me the ramrod to hold, and cutting a long slice of bark out of a gum-tree, made two plates capital plates, he said, for a bush dinner. I told you we had got some salt and some damper, and I was

pretty hungry, as you may suppose, and I thought it the most delicious dinner I ever ate. When I had done, I laid down on the grass, and Hector and Fly came and laid themselves down beside me, and somehow, I don't know how it was, I fell asleep, I was so tired. I slept a good while, for the stock-keeper said it would have been a sin to wake me, I was in such a sweet sleep. I woke up, however, after a good nap, and felt as if I could eat a bit more kangaroo. But it was getting late, and so we made the best of our way home. We passed by the place where we had killed the first kangaroo; so the stock-keeper brought home the hind-quarters and the three skins, and I brought home a tail; and really I don't know which is best, kangaroo steaks or kangaroo steamer.

"Or cockatoo-pie," said his mother; "and now to bed. I dare say we shall dream all night of your 'Tale of a Kangaroo.'"

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Will's account of his sport amused us very much; and it was a correct description of the way of hunting the animal. I may remark here on the amazing quantity of grass that a kangaroo eats; it eats nothing else in its wild state, but the quantity found in it has often astonished me. When caught very young, and tamed, it will eat all sorts of vegetables; but of all things I ever tried it with, it is fondest of brown sugar; it will follow you about for brown sugar, just as sheep will follow the shepherd to get a lick of a lump of salt. It is a timid, fearful animal; very pretty in appearance when its head and neck only are visible over the bushes, but an ungainly creature in its whole aspect. The feature of its false belly or pouch, into which the young one creeps to sleep or to avoid danger, is peculiar to the females of all the native animals of this country.

Chapter Fifth.

Takes possession of his new house—Delight of independence—Crab puts the plough into the ground—The garden, and sheep-shearing—The settler takes stock and makes a discovery.

April 1.—Took possession of our new house, and worked hard at the doors and window-shutters. Frost at night.

April 2.—All hands at the stone chimney. Made a rough job of it, but got on pretty well. The stone is easy to work; it easily breaks into flakes handy for working; as for mortar, we use some sandy loam mixed with clay from the river, and it seems to make cement good enough for our purpose.

April 3 and 4.—Finished the stone chimney, and lighted a blazing fire, for the nights are cold now; and with our large table in the middle of the room, with Betsy's green cloth on it, and seated on our logs of wood, we formed a cheerful party at supper.

April 5.—Rose early, according to my custom, and surveyed my new dwelling with a particular sort of satisfaction. "No rent to pay for you," said I; "no taxes, that's pleasant; no poor-rates, that's a comfort; and no one can give me warning to quit, and that's another comfort; and it's my own, thank God, and that's the greatest comfort of all." I cast my eyes on the plain before me, and saw my flock of sheep studding the plain, with my working bullocks at a little distance. My dogs

came up and licked my hands. Presently my children came out into the fresh morning air, which was rather bracing, as the weather was getting colder every day, in the morning and evening, but still warm in the middle of the day, and we had a romp with the dogs. As we sat at breakfast that morning in our rude cottage, with the bare walls of logs of trees, and the shingle roof above us, all rough enough, but spacious, and a little too airy, I began to have a foretaste of that feeling of independence and security of home and substance which I have so many years enjoyed in a higher degree than I then looked for; but I must not anticipate.

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Finished all the doors and shutters, and put on good fastenings of bolts and locks which I had brought from England.

April 6.—Considered in my mind whether it would not be well to turn up some ground to sweeten ready for spring sowing in September. The winter frosts, should there be any, of June, July, and August, would pulverize the clods a bit. I can't help smiling while I write this of June, July, and August, being the *winter* months; it shows how topsy-turvy things are here. Consulted Crab about it, for he understands farming well. Crab says there must be something wrong about it; he cannot understand how I can pretend to have a *SPRING* sowing in *SEPTEMBER*! "It's against reason," he says, "and against nature, and he can't encourage such nonsense."

April 7.—Thought I'd try a bit of land about a quarter of a mile from the house, and that lay handy for fencing—about twelve acres. Stuck the plough into

it this morning, and it turned up rarely. Crab came to laugh at us. I saw he eyed the furrows wistfully, and cast a longing look at the plough. At last he grew very fidgetty, and taking occasion to find fault with the furrows for not being straight, he seized hold of the shafts, shoving me aside without much ceremony, saying, "Heaven be good to us! do you call that ploughing? Here, give us hold." His grim visage seemed actually to change and light up when he felt the wood in his hands, and giving the word, Bob smacked on the bullocks, and Crab, in the exuberance of his joy, began to sing some extraordinary Shropshire song, which made the woods ring again, and the work went on merrily. From that hour Crab would allow no one to touch the plough but himself, and he really seemed to enjoy his work with all the relish of an unexpected restoration to an old and loved occupation.

The ground was quite clear of trees, and without many stones, and in little more than a fortnight the whole was turned up. Then we set to, to cut down the light timber in the vicinity to make a bush fence, which employed us for some time. After that, we worked hard to fence in a bit of ground for a garden. We had to go rather farther from home after some stringy-bark trees best for splitting laths, and contrived to enclose about an acre. Then we had a stock-yard to build, and pens for the sheep, and to fence it with bush fences. Building the stock-yard was hard work, as we had to form it of the solid trunks of trees, about nine inches to a foot in diameter, and from twenty to thirty feet long; these we had to drag by bullock-chains and four bullocks, from a spot about a mile and a half from the house: heavy

work, and hard labour to set them up. I determined to do everything well, and in such a way as to fall in with my plan of the future farm and buildings. All this work, and the sending of the cart three times to Camp to bring up various articles, occupied the whole of the winter months of June, July, and August.

I ought to say here, that I found the winter very mild. The snow lay on the ground once for three days, about two inches thick, and there was ice strong enough to bear in one or two places, in a deep hollow about three miles from the cottage, which the rays of the sun did not reach. The mornings and evenings were cold, particularly just before daylight, when the cold was sharpest, but the middle of the day was like a bright October day in England. There is very little rain in the autumn in Van Diemen's Land, that is, from the beginning of March to the end of May; and not much rain during the winter months of June, July and August. The rainy season is for about six weeks or two months in the spring, that is, in September and October.

November 1.—My one hundred and eighty ewes, which I bought last March, have produced me two hundred and twenty lambs, many having dropped two lambs a-piece. I trust the wool will be improved, as I had taken care to choose the best rams I could find shortly after I bought them. This makes my flock look respectable.

This month I bought six cows heavy with calf, for four pounds each. They are fine cows, but rather wild. Applied for another servant from the government, and had assigned to me a tolerably good one, but he knows nothing of farming. We find now that we have plenty

to do. My poor wife works hard, for the female servants are generally idle, troublesome things. Her mother, however, helps her with the children. * *

Got the windows of the cottage glazed, and covered the floor all over with boards, and put boards over our heads for a ceiling. The shepherd found some whitish earth, like whiting, about six miles from the cottage. I had long since plastered it inside and out with sand and river clay, and now I gave it a coat of this whitewash outside, which gave it a very smart appearance. For the inside, I mixed with the white earth some of the red ochre which is abundant in many parts of the country: this produced something of a salmon colour, and the plaster being smooth, the ochre gave it the appearance of stucco, and it looked very well and seemly.

We begin to think something of ourselves, and should assume airs of importance, only there is no one near us to show them to.

December.—We are now getting to the end of December, and summer is coming on. The wheat looks well, which Crab attributes to his peculiar method of ploughing, which he has endeavoured to explain to me; but I cannot understand it, although I agree with him, of course. He says he shall wait to see how the wheat comes up, and then he shall bid me good-by and go home.

The garden comes on beautifully. Peas want sticking. Cabbages and cauliflowers transplanted last month doing well. The six cows dropped their calves this month. This will make them attached to the place. The *beginning* of the farm looks thriving; may the *end* not disappoint me!

Chapter Tenth.

Expenses of settling—Increase of sheep and cattle—Anecdotes of snakes—His position in 1821—Increase of sheep and cattle in 1824—Sheep-stealing increases in the Colony—Hears some disagreeable accounts of bush-rangers—His prosperous state in May, 1824—His tranquillity is suddenly disturbed by distressing cries of alarm from a neighbouring farm.

March 1st, 1818.—As I had from the first formed the plan of attending particularly to the breeding of sheep, as the easiest and most profitable occupation that could be pursued in Van Diemen's Land, I did not embarrass myself by attempting to bring a large quantity of land under cultivation, and I applied myself therefore to the tillage of my farm no more than was sufficient to supply my own consumption. I kept my attention steadily fixed on the raising of wool, as a commodity, should the value of the carcass fail, of easy conveyance, compared with corn, and of certain sale as an article of export.

December 31, 1818.—Divided my sheep into two flocks. Their numbers stand thus :—

In March last I find the numbers 702. Since then, lambs dropped in October from the 180 old ewes—ewes, 118; wethers, 100=218 lambs. The 100 young ewes dropped in November 62 ewe lambs and 58 wethers=120.

This makes—old flock	.	.	.	702
Old ewes' lambs	.	.	.	218
Young ewes' lambs	.	.	.	120
				1040

Deducting from this number 84 head consumed on the farm, my two flocks amount to 956. My working bullocks are the same as before, namely eight. My six cows have produced me six more calves, raising my stock of cattle to 18, besides the working bullocks.

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I was a little puzzled to know what to do with my wool, the expense of carting it to town being great. An agent of one of the merchants offered me three-pence per pound to take it away at his own expense, which, after some consideration, I thought it best to accept.

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I worked hard this year at my fencing, which is one of the most difficult, laborious, and expensive of a new settler's operations; but if it can be done without encroaching too much on his funds, it amply repays the labour and outlay; I mean the fencing in of his corn-fields, paddocks, sheep-yards, and homesteads.

I have not said much about the snakes to be seen all over the colony. We have killed a great many of them, but we have never been bitten by them. They always avoid you, and are glad to get out of your way. I have one or two anecdotes to relate of them, which I may as well introduce here.

I was one day walking with my shepherd, and observing the sheep, when being tired, we sat down on the grass; there was dead wood scattered around. I had only just seated myself, when turning my head I beheld a monstrous black snake close behind me; it was nearly six feet long, and apparently asleep, at least it was quite motionless. I silently pointed out the reptile

to the stock-keeper, and drawing from my pocket the pistol which I usually carried, and which was loaded with ball, I approached cautiously within a few inches of the creature's head, intending to blow its brains out. Drawing the trigger, the powder flashed in the pan, but the charge having escaped, either from careless ramming or from having long carried it about in my pocket, the remaining powder in the barrel was only just sufficient to move the ball, which rolled slowly out of the muzzle, and dropping on the snake's head, roused it. I think I never was in such a terrible fright in my life; I made sure that I should kill the snake on the instant, and there I was on one knee close to it, and without the chance of escaping if it made a dart at me. By some extraordinary good luck, the snake was frightened too; it raised up its head—looked at me for a moment—and then glided away. We were both in such a fright that we had not presence of mind to kill it with sticks, and so it escaped, and right glad were we to escape the danger.

At another time, I was looking about at a short distance from the cottage, in the autumn, when the rivers get very low, when I observed on the opposite side of a deep pool of water a rustling among the long grass, and presently the head of a snake appeared over the bank, peering with curious eye into the pool below. I judged, from the creature's movements, that it had been accustomed to drink out of this pool, and was disappointed to find the water so low as to be out of its reach. It seemed to ponder a good deal on this state of things, turning its head to the right and left, as if to devise some means of getting at the water. At last it turned

its head towards the long wiry grass around it, and selecting an appropriate tuft close to the edge of the bank, it twisted the end of its tail round the grass, and so letting itself down and hanging by the extremity of its tail, it was enabled to reach the water. It then drank, frequently raising up its head as a fowl does when it drinks. I was observing the motions of the gentleman all the time with much curiosity, and with my fowling-piece ready to shoot it before it retired; for the deadliest war is the constant proclamation of the colony against all snakes, and no mercy is ever shown to this most dangerous and insidious enemy. I fired and killed it. It measured nearly five feet and a half in length.

I shall tell only one more story of snakes. I was riding on the other side of the colony, about twenty miles from Launceston, when I suddenly came upon a snake crossing the road; it was not a very large one, but I was struck with the remarkable beauty and brilliancy of its colours. I had my double-barrel fowling-piece slung at my back, as was usual with me, and in my hand I had one of the little straight horsewhips used on horseback. The snake crossed just before me, and I stopped immediately and alighted, with the intention of killing it, urged by that instinct to kill a snake wherever seen, which becomes added, I think, to our other natural instincts, after a residence in the colony. The creature moved away with great rapidity towards some trees at the distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, on a path which I directly saw was a snake-track. I had great difficulty in making my horse follow me in this chase. When I came up to the reptile, I reached out my arm and gave it a slash on its tail with my horse-

whip. This made it stop, and turn its head and hiss, with a threat to dart at me. Then I kept back, and the snake made another start, till I brought it to a stand-still by another cut of my whip. I could see no broken bough near me to smash it with, and I did not like to dirty my fowling-piece by discharging it.

This running fight lasted for some score of yards, till at last the snake, getting exasperated, turned, and stood at bay. I relate this anecdote principally, because of the attitude which the snake now assumed, which I had often seen in pictures, but never before in nature. The snake coiled itself up into a close coil, so as to form a good foundation, it seemed, for a spring. It reminded me, in this attitude, of the picture of the snake in an old edition of Milton's "Paradise Lost," where the serpent is represented tempting Eve. This resemblance occurred to me while I was fighting it.

We now had a grand battle. I let go the reign of my horse, and fought the snake with my horsewhip, I slashing it occasionally round the neck and body, and it darting out at me, and hissing furiously, with its eyes as bright as diamonds. It was rather rash of me, I confess, but I was excited at the time, and did not think of the risk that I ran. I could not master it, however, with my slight weapon, so I retired, when it immediately made off again, as much as to say, "Let me alone, and I'll let you alone." I followed it till I came to some broken boughs, when I easily killed it by a blow on the body.

* * * *

On looking over my journal, I do not find anything deserving of particular mention up to 1821. I ploughed,

and I sowed, and I reaped in due order, and my flocks and herds increased without much attention on my part, except to keep them together. I attended carefully to the garden. My children had suffered no illness since I had arrived in the colony. In 1821 some new settlers took land in this district, and the place began to assume the appearance of becoming more inhabited.

A surgeon, a gentleman-like and clever man, settled near us; but there was nothing for him to do except attending to an occasional accident. A blacksmith, at the close of this year, established himself on the banks of the Clyde, and this was a great convenience to us, during this year I planned out a cut from a river, where a natural bend afforded the facility for the purpose of erecting a flour-mill, which was much wanted, as there was no mill nearer than camp, fifty miles off; and we had to cart our wheat down to the town, and return with the flour—a tedious and expensive process. I had to manage with a hand-mill for my own use, but the time consumed in grinding corn in this way was very great, and the labour of it was distasteful to the servants, so that it was frequently out of order. In the course of the following year I erected a small flour mill, with an undershot wheel, which answered very well, and its cost was soon repaid by its convenience to myself, and by the toll which was paid to me by my neighbours as the inhabitants increased.

In 1821, a careful census was taken of the statistics of the colony, which I find in my journal to stand thus:—

Number of inhabitants, 7,185; acres in cultivation, 14,940; sheep, 170,000; cattle, 35,000; horses, 350.

During 1822 two magistrates were appointed for this district.

May, 1824.—Matters remained much as usual up to May, 1824. This completes my seventh year in the colony. During these seven years the colony had assumed a very different appearance. Numerous emigrants had arrived, and the country had become more settled. The value of sheep had risen in 1821, and good ewes sold currently for 20s. a head, and if with lambs by their side, from 20s. to 30s. This state of things put the old settlers who had attended to their stock in fine spirits, for the influx of settlers kept up the price of stock for some years. I did very well by the sale of mine, and had the good fortune not to neglect taking advantage of the opportunity. I realized considerable sums by the sales which I made, and my sheep sold well, as the wool was fine enough to command a ready sale at the same time that the carcass was heavy enough to suit the new settlers, who wanted sheep as meat for consumption. I find, on referring to my journal, that in May, 1824, my stock stood as follows :—

Sheep—ewes, 3,650; wethers, 290. Total, 3940.

Cattle—75.

Working bullocks—14.

This year I bought three horses, two mares heavy with foal for £50 and 60£, and a gelding, for which I gave £65, for my own riding, as my circuits began to be too heavy to be performed on foot. I was in Hobart Town at the close of the autumn of 1821, at which time there was more than one excellent hotel, when, in walking about, I came upon a bit of land, about half an acre (within the town I may say), and covered with rubbish

and stagnant water here and there, and looking wretched and neglected; the run of new buildings had taken a turn in another direction, and this piece of waste had been overlooked.

Living at a distance, I could not help being struck with the rapidity with which the town was increasing; a sightly church had been built; a new court-house in progress of completion; the government house completed in its improved state; there was a talk of the establishment of a bank; and the colony was thriving and improving rapidly. I took all these things into consideration, and was surprised to find this plot of ground neglected; but so it was, and nobody seemed to care for it. Having spare money which I did not at the moment well know how to dispose of, I made inquiries about the owner and price, and found that I might have the lot for a hundred pounds. So I bought the bit of waste land; but other matters distracting my attention from it, I did nothing with it for some years after. What was done with it I shall have to relate in its proper place.

* * * *

Sheep-stealing had been rife for the last two or three years, the value of the animal making it a great temptation, and the facilities for driving off and concealing sheep being considered, it is not to be wondered at. One or two bush-rangers have also been abroad; I was on business in town this year (1824), and heard the information of a party who had been attacked by bush-rangers. It made a very disagreeable impression on me, and I felt very uneasy as I listened to it, from thinking that my own family was exposed at that moment to the same disaster.

I could not sleep all night after hearing this news of bush-rangers being out. Hitherto we had not been molested at the Clyde, but it occurred to me that the arrival there of fresh emigrants likely to have money and valuables about them, and new to the country, and thereby more easy to be attacked, might tempt the convicts to go up there. These thoughts kept possession of me all night, and I could not resist the desire of returning home. At dawn of day, therefore, I set out, and my horse being fresh, I had no difficulty in reaching the Clyde before two o'clock the same day. I may remark here that the horses in Van Diemen's Land are capable of enduring great fatigue; they are small, but strong and hardy; sure-footed, and capable of supporting their work on the natural grass of the country on their journeys. * * * I was glad to find all safe at home, but I made my wife rather uneasy by my report of the marauding of the bush-rangers at Pitt Water.

This information about the sheep-stealing coming upon the news of the bush-rangers at Pitt Water, made me uncomfortable and restless. But the sight of my family and my home soon restored me to my usual cheerfulness.

* * * * *

Extract from my journal of May, 1824:—

“Kept a sharper look-out after my own flocks. Certainly I have been very lucky hitherto; things have thrived with me most prosperously. I am now in possession of a numerous flock of sheep; of a tolerable herd of cattle; I have forty-five acres of land under tillage; the building of my new stone house proceeds favourably; I have a fair portion of land fenced in; my garden has succeeded admirably; I have all sorts of English vegeta-

bles in abundance ; strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, young apple and pear trees, vigorous and growing fast.

“ My family, now increased to six, begin to be companions to me ; and their education, even in this out-of-the-way place, has not been neglected. The place is becoming settled around me, which although it curtails the run for my sheep and cattle, increases the feeling of security, and affords some society.

“ My eldest boy, now seventeen years of age, is a valuable assistant to me, and affords the promise of becoming a healthy, intelligent, and honourable man. My daughter Betsy grows a fine, handsome girl ; and my other children are healthy, happy, and improving. I have the pleasurable feeling of caring little whether my consumption of meat and flour is a little less or a little more. Abundance reigns around me. The feeling of anxiety with which I used to be haunted in England, in respect to how my children could be made certain of lodging, food, and clothes, has departed from me. There is plenty for all ; and the dominant desire now is changed to that of becoming wealthy. To be sure, we still live rather in the rough ; but usage has made it familiar to us. We use no fine furniture, wear no fine clothes, and our establishment still bears the impress of a settler's early life. But I am rich (for independence is riches) in sheep and cattle, and house and land. My large room has become furnished with an ample supply of books, and I find recreation and advantage in their perusal.

“ The climate, on experience, we find healthy, though very changeable, and subject to extreme variations of heat and cold. I find, by the register of my thermome-

ter, that the temperature has varied thirty-two degrees between night and noon; being below freezing-point in the night, and above sixty-three at twelve and one o'clock. These variations, do not affect the health of any of us; we *feel* the cold,—that is all.

“This year we have added fish to our table. We threw a net across a narrow part of the river, about half a mile from the house, and we now obtain a plentiful supply of eels at most times. We catch also a small fish of the nature of the gudgeon, but larger, which we call the fresh water smelt. But the rivers in this colony, at least the inland portions of them, are not prolific of fish; nor do the large lakes, the sources of several of them, supply much. Scarcely a fish, indeed, is to be found in the lakes of the colony. There is plenty of wild fowl at the lakes; I have seen flocks literally of thousands of wild ducks on one of them.”

But to return to my Journal.

Thus, in May, 1824, all things prospered with me. But now the uniform life which I had led for some years, experienced a great change. Just before the winter, that is, toward the end of May, 1824, we were sitting round our cheerful fire, and the servant had with difficulty borne in a huge log to replenish it; it was about nine o'clock, and quite dark, when the barking of the dogs announced the arrival of a stranger; he was on horseback, as we could hear from the sound of the horse's hoofs on the hard ground. He was quickly shown into the house, and according to the custom of the colony, food and drink were placed before him ere he was troubled with any questions. But he was eager to communicate the tidings with which he was charged.



BUSHRANGERS ABROAD - THE ALARM.



Information had been received by the government of the escape of a body of convicts from Macquarie Harbour, who were spreading consternation over the district of Pitt Water, where they had plundered and ill-used many settlers, and where they had been joined by further bands of convict servants. Our guest was in haste to communicate the intelligence to the resident magistrates, as it was thought likely that the band of bush-rangers would turn their steps to this district, as being unprotected, and abounding to the west in places of concealment.

We were still in earnest conversation on this alarming news, and I was hastily revolving in my mind the best means of guarding against an attack, when loud cries, seemingly for help, from the opposite side of the river, on which a new settler had lately fixed himself, caused us suddenly to break up our party. I lost no time in preparing our arms, which from habit were always kept in a state of efficiency, and calling in two of my men on whom I could entirely depend, I entrusted them with a musket a-piece, and made such preparations for our own defence as the circumstances afforded.

Crab, who had now become part of the family, undertook to defend the house; and after a hasty consultation, we agreed that it would not be kind or manly to abandon our neighbours in their distress and difficulty. I was perplexed to contrive how to render them the requisite assistance, and to leave a sufficient defence at home, when a fresh and violent barking of the dogs caused us a further alarm. The night was quite dark, but the stars shone brightly. The dogs barked furiously, and it was plain to us, who were acquainted with

the language of their warnings, that they were excited by the approach of some unusual object, and of more than a single individual.

Seeing the necessity of prompt and decisive action, I advanced from the door of the cottage, being protected in the rear by one of the men. A voice amidst the tumult called out to me to call off the dogs, who were furious. I thought I recognised the voice of the speaker, and it proved to be a neighbour who had settled about four miles off. He had been going his rounds to look after his sheep, marauders being abroad, when, approaching within half a mile of my cottage, his attention had been attracted by the cries which had alarmed us. He was well armed, and accompanied by two friends, also well armed.

Cheered by this reinforcement, I lost no time in acquainting them with the news of the escape of the convicts from Macquarie Harbour, and of my fears that our new neighbour was in the hands of the bush-rangers. They at once agreed to lend him their help; and as I was well acquainted with the point where the river could be best crossed, and my home being now secure from any sudden attack, we advanced without delay to the scene of danger. But as this forms one of the epochs of my life, I must reserve the account of the adventures and disasters, which now came thick upon me, to another chapter.

Chapter Eleventh.

Hastens with a party of friends to his neighbour's assistance—The dangerous passage of the river on the trunk of a tree—The lifeless body of a young girl strangely discovered—The plundered dwelling, and the desolate mother.

THE family which we were hastening to help had not arrived on their land more than three weeks, and consisted of a Mr. Moss, his wife, a daughter about seventeen, and two young boys of seven and six years of age. They had been well off at one time, but a succession of misfortunes had reduced their means to an income too small for a bare subsistence in England, but amply sufficient for a prosperous establishment in Van Diemen's Land. Mrs. Moss had been highly educated, and her daughter was possessed of more than the usual accomplishments of her age, and of their former station. The arrival of this young lady at our settlement seemed, as a young friend of mine expressed himself, "like the springing up of a beautiful flower in the wilderness." We all felt a strong interest in these new settlers, and we were ready to risk much to serve them.

While my friends put themselves in fighting order, I buckled my old cavalry broad-sword round me so as not to interfere with my movements, for having served in the yeomanry in Surrey, I had ever after a liking for the weapon, to which I felt I could trust in case of close conflict; and with my double-barrel fowling-piece slung

120 DANGEROUS PASSAGE OF THE RIVER.

over my back, and my large horse-pistols in the pockets of my shooting-jacket, I led the way across the river. My companions followed cautiously and silently in Indian file. It was quite dark, with the exception of such glimmering light as the brilliancy of the stars afforded.

It was my plan to cross the river by the trunk of a tree, which had fallen over from the opposite bank, and formed a natural bridge, a rough one, and not easily to be passed by day; and in the dark, the passage over it was rather a dangerous experiment. There was a dead silence around, which seemed more terrible than the cries by which we had recently been alarmed, and filled us with ominous fears for the fate of our neighbours.

We quickly reached the crossing-place, and in a low whisper I warned my companions of the dangerous points of the bridge. My young neighbour, Beresford, was particularly anxious on this occasion. I did not remark it at the time, as we were all active and excited; but subsequent events made me remember it. The river at this spot is narrow, and flows with the rapidity of a mountain torrent. I observed in the gloom that Beresford's two companions hesitated at the sight of this difficulty.

"I wish we had light for this work," said one; "I can see the foam of the water, and I think I can see something which I suppose is the tree lying across it; but it's an awkward job this."

"Speak low," said I; "you don't know what ears may be listening to you."

"Speak low!—why, the roaring of this water is enough to drown all the noise that we shall make on this side. The river seems to be angry to-night. I

hope you are sure of your tree-bridge. I should not like to find myself in that boiling gulf below; if I did, I'm inclined to think no one else would find me."

"It's an ugly sight," said the first speaker; "but if Thornley is sure of the passage, I'll venture it; and don't let us lose any time, for if we are to do any good, we must be quick about it."

"Well, we are in for it; we can't go back; who leads the way?"

"I'll lead the way," said Beresford; "I'm the youngest of the party; now, follow me."

"No," said I, "that's my business; I know the passage best. . . ."

"Perhaps not better than I do," said Beresford; "come on."

"How can that be?" said I; "you have not occasion to cross the river so often as I have."

Beresford said something which the noise of the waters prevented me from hearing. I led the way, and began to crawl over on my hands and knees.

I must confess that it was not without a momentary tremor that I beheld the white foam of the torrent dashing furiously past beneath me. A single false movement was death; and the disagreeable feeling came over me, that if an enemy should have had the foresight to guard this point, I and my companions, in our defenceless position were exposed to sure destruction.

With these thoughts agitating me, and the darkness of the night, the incessant rushing of the water, and the danger of our expedition, all tending to inspire doubt and fear, it is impossible to describe my sensations, when, stretching forward my arm to feel the way before me, my

hand encountered what seemed to be a human head of hair. I was clinging to the trunk of the tree, in a position disabling me from the use of my weapons, nor indeed did the necessity of holding fast allow me to have more than one hand momentarily disengaged in my creeping posture. All sorts of fears were instantly conjured up in my horror and bewilderment.

My first thought was that the bush-rangers, suspecting our intention, were lying in ambush, and every instant I expected to receive a volley from the opposite bank. Then visions of the natives arose, and I actually crouched up, the better to defend myself against the shower of spears which I knew would be the beginning of their attack. My companions behind me, embarrassed by my stoppage, and not knowing the cause, urged me to proceed, as the swift running of the white waters beneath their eyes was beginning to produce giddiness. For nearly a minute I was totally at a loss what to do. At last the mist with which the sudden alarm had enveloped my brain began to disperse; I reasoned with myself rapidly and decisively.

I knew that to go back over our perilous bridge was, in the dark, and encumbered as we were with our arms, impossible. Go on we must. As I formed this resolution, it suddenly occurred to me that the form before me must be in the same embarrassment as to advancing or retreating as myself; and that at any rate the chances were equal in the event of a struggle for mastery. Emboldened by this thought, I stretched out my hand again, and met with the same object. It seemed certainly a human head! It was motionless, and had remained, as well as I could judge, in the precise position

in which my hand lighted on it before. But the second time, the hair struck me as being softer, and the sensation flashed across me that it was not a man's hair that I was feeling. My wonder increased by this new discovery, and my fears yielding to my excitement, I extended my arm, and traced the long ringlets of a woman! My alarm was now changed to wonderment and horror. Laying my hand on her face, I found it deadly cold; her arms were encircled round the trunk of the tree; but they hung lifeless, and I at once guessed that the female, whoever she might be, in attempting to cross the river by this dangerous place, rendered more dangerous and frightful by the darkness, had been terrified by the roar of the raging waters, and had fainted.

What to do in this unexpected dilemma, I was at a loss to imagine. My companions began to be alarmed, and the infection of superstitious fear was beginning to unnerve them. In these perplexing and dangerous circumstances, I felt the necessity of coming to some prompt decision. The female before me had evidently either fainted, or perhaps overcome by fear and exhausting excitement, was dead! But her lifeless body formed an obstacle to our further progress, and I considered that, at that very moment, while I was deliberating, the work of death might be going on among our neighbours whom we were endeavouring to succour, and that our assistance was prevented by an impediment to whom all help perhaps now was vain.

With this feeling—that four lives were at stake on the trunk of the tree, trusting to my guidance, and that other lives were jeopardized by the delay of our assistance, the exquisitely painful thought came over me, that stern ne-

cessity justified the sacrifice of the one for the many, and that we must risk the dislodging of the body of the woman for the purpose of completing our passage across the river. The form lay motionless, and on the balance on the slippery trunk of the tree; the slightest motion was sufficient to overturn it into the boiling and roaring gulf below! My companions urged me to proceed. I explained to them in a few words the cause of my stoppage; but they still continued to press me to go forward, their fear of the present peril overcoming their apprehension of the remoter hazard, should the bush-rangers be in ambush on the other side, and waiting for us to rise up to get the surer aim; they vehemently and angrily complained that they could no longer keep their hold, and that they could neither recede nor advance.

Impelled by the imminency of the danger, my senses benumbed by the cold, and my mind confused by the unceasing roaring and foaming of the furious waters, my presence of mind almost forsook me. I stretched out my hand again: the form was still motionless—but I traced the outline of the small and delicate features of that cold face, and quick as lightning the thought of my own daughter flashed across me. That thought restored my wandering senses. I became instantly calm and collected: and with a sort of desperate energy I raised myself to a sitting posture across the tree, and propelling myself with my hands towards the object before me, I took firm hold of her long tresses to prevent the body from slipping from its dangerous resting-place. All continued to be still around, except the noise of the river. I now raised my voice to overtop the roaring of the waters, and turning my head towards my wondering com-

panions, I communicated to them my intention to preserve the body, dead or alive.

"It is the form," said I, "of a young girl."

"A young girl!" exclaimed Beresford. "Then ——"

"In the name of Heaven," said the man behind him, "do not stay talking. Man or woman, young or old, we must pass now to the other side. Necessity has no law. Move on quickly, for I shall not be able to hold on half a minute longer."

"Yes," cried out the hindermost, "move on—move on—I dare not attempt to move backwards. As it is, the cold has so benumbed me, and I am so giddy with the roaring of these waters under me, that every moment I expect to slip off. Move on, I say; this is no time for fine feelings; our own lives are at stake. We are lying here to be murdered, if there are really bush-rangers abroad—and this affair looks like it. Move on, I say, or by —— I shall be tempted to make a way for myself."

"Stop," said Beresford; "stop—for God's sake, stop. I have a horrible presentiment of who this poor girl must be. We must make an effort to save her. Let me try to pass you (speaking to me); or stay—I think I see a branch below that the water is rushing against; I will make the attempt to save her if I perish."

With that my young friend, passing his fowling-piece to me to hold for him, threw himself by a bold and active movement under the tree; and clinging by the broken boughs, by a succession of desperate struggles succeeded in gaining a position on the other side of the female, where the thick part of the trunk afforded a surer footing. He then gradually drew the motionless form

towards him, and taking it in his arms, bore it to a small distance from the river, and laid it on the grass, glistening with the white frost. In the meantime we had all succeeded in crossing the bridge safely; and the men finding themselves on firm ground, soon recovered their presence of mind and courage, and were ready for action. There was no time to be lost. The spot which we had to reach was less than a quarter of a mile distant, and we were all eager to move forward. But what was to be done with the lifeless female? Young Beresford had been endeavouring to restore warmth by chafing the hands of the inanimate body, but without success. It seemed as dangerous to leave it on the cold ground, should life be not quite extinct, as to bear it with us. But decision was necessary; and yielding to the entreaties of Beresford, whose interest in the inanimate form seemed overpowering, we hastily agreed that he should bear the body with us, while I advanced before, being best acquainted with the locality, his two friends following close after me. In this order we approached the spot where our new neighbour had raised his homely dwelling.

As I neared the place, my foot lighted on a soft substance, which induced me to stoop down to examine it. It was a dead kangaroo dog. I felt it, and found that its brains had been dashed out by some heavy instrument. This occurrence foreboded danger, and we proceeded rapidly and silently, but with increased caution. The outline of the hut now loomed through the dark; all was silent. We were perplexed how to proceed; we could see no enemy, and feared some plot to entrap us. We continued our advance, however, to the door of the

hut in a line, young Beresford bearing the body in the rear. I held his fowling-piece in my hand, with my own slung behind me. We reached the door; it was fastened, but we thought we could distinguish stifled breathing within. We knocked; no answer. We were impressed with the conviction that the enemy, whoever it might be, was there.

I directed Beresford, in a whisper, to take the body to the side of the hut, that it might be out of the line of fire from the windows and door. Then, with one dash of my foot, I burst the door from its hinges, and we three rushed in. A scream, so deep, so piercing, so full of mortal fear and agony, that it even now thrills through me as I recall it, arrested our steps. But I guessed on the instant the real state of the case. On the hearth the embers were still red. Snatching a handful of thatch from the roof, I made a blaze. That light revealed to me the form of a woman, crouched in a corner, bound, with two young children beside her. The transient blaze of the lighted grass ceased, and we were again in darkness.

"Oh, God!" cried the woman, "are you come again? I have never spoken—not one word—indeed I have not—and the children have scarcely breathed—but if you are determined——"

"We are friends," said I, "come to assist you; we heard your cries——"

"Oh, why did you not come sooner?—my husband—my child—my daughter, where is she?—she ran out to get help—is she drowned?—what have they done with her?—my God! my God! shall I ever recover the horrors of this dreadful night?"

While she spoke these words, which pierced our very souls, and filled us with the most fearful forebodings, one of my neighbour's friends had again lighted up some thatch on the hearth, which threw a glare around, and enabled us to see about us; fortunately, a candle which had been extinguished was found close at hand; this afforded us a dim and dismal light.

Beresford, who heard the scream, had caught the words of the mother, and while I stationed one of our party at the door of the hut, and another at the back, he hastily brought in the body of the apparently lifeless girl. The mother, whom I had unbound, did not speak; she gazed on the body of her child in speechless agony.

"She is dead;" at last she muttered—"she is dead!—they have killed her!—better so, perhaps, than worse! What may have happened? Am I awake, or is it a dream? Oh, no—it is all real—cold and dead—cold and dead!"

A passionate burst of tears followed these words, uttered in all the calmness of despair, and the children, now recovering from their stupor, mingled their cries with the bursting sobs of the mother."

But my young friend was not inactive during this painful scene. With wonderful coolness and presence of mind, he took all the steps that were likely to restore consciousness, if life remained; and the energies of the mother beginning to revive, she presently added her assistance. He had placed the body of the poor girl on a rough wooden couch, with her feet close to the fire, which was now blazing up briskly. The mother rubbed her feet, and my friend chafed her hands; but life seemed to have departed. The mother said nothing, but worked on

silently, the two children looking on in trembling expectation. I stood by, racking my brain to remember all the means that I had read or heard of to restore suspended animation. There was no apparent injury, her mother assured us, to cause death, and our hopes revived even at the faint prospect of restoration which this intelligence afforded us. All that I have related, since we began to cross the river, took place in less than twenty minutes, so that the possibility of life being not yet quite extinct still remained; but the hope became every moment less and less.

While we were thus employed and thus agitated with our various fears—the mother for her child, the young man for the beautiful girl before us—and I, as a parent, entering into the bitter sorrows of their weeping mother, we heard loud shouts proceeding from the direction of the place where we had recently crossed the river, and presently, at a rapid pace, a party of friends joined us.

The news of “bush-rangers abroad” had quickly spread from neighbour to neighbour, and the present party having assembled, they learnt at my house our expedition and its object, and immediately started to support us. They had crossed at a point of the river higher up, but affording an easier and a safer passage. Fortunately the gentlemen who had settled among us as a surgeon was among the party, and his attention was immediately directed to the apparently lifeless form of the beautiful young girl.

It was a moment of most painful expectation. He felt her pulse long and anxiously. I saw his countenance change. He held before her lips a small pocket looking glass, which he first, with professional coolness, carefully wiped. He inspected it once—twice!

"Place her," said he, "on her side."

It was done.

Again he applied the glass to her lips. It was untarnished.

"Throw more wood on the fire," said the surgeon.
 "Light wood—quick—make it blaze up."

He applied the glass again.

Gradually his countenance changed from the expression of hopelessness which had saddened it, and suddenly it lighted up as the brightness of the glass became obscured. We were breathless.

"Hush!" said he. "Be calm," addressing her mother.
 "All will depend on your coolness and presence of mind. If you can command your feelings, I may do much. She is not dead!"

Here an hysteric sob seemed to choke the mother, but she stifled it; and, with hands clenched, and cheeks streaming with silent floods of tears, she sunk on her knees, with her eyes dimly gazing at him who seemed to be her guardian angel.

"She is not dead!" repeated the surgeon, in a low tone. "Life—I think—I am sure—still remains; but the slightest shock would instantly destroy it. Beware of exciting her by questions or by disastrous news, should I succeed in restoring her to consciousness. Nothing but silence and soothing will save her from death or insanity. Has any one some brandy with him?"

Fortunately one of the party—the most drunken fellow in the settlement—had a travelling flask of rum, which, indeed, he was never without. It was quickly produced; and, after its owner had taken a sip of it,

“to see.” as he said, “that it was the right stuff,” he handed it to the surgeon. I am inclined to think that that flask of rum saved the young lady’s life, but it cost its proprietor his own sooner than in the ordinary course of things, for from that moment he was never without his flask, always emptied, and ever refilled, “in case,” as he used to say, “any other unfortunate person might chance to want some of it; and so, on the strength of the life that he boasted it had saved, he hastened the end of his own.

“And now, gentlemen,” said the surgeon, “be pleased to retire from the hut, and leave me alone with this lady. There seems to be more work for you to do before this family can be set to rights.”

We silently obeyed. I was the last who quitted the room; and as I was going out at the door, the poor mother laid her hand convulsively on my arm, and with a sort of desperate calmness whispered, “My husband—have they murdered him?”

“Surely not,” I said; “hope for the best—you see we are strong enough to take active measures for his safety. Depend on us that we will neglect nothing to find him, and to restore him to you.”

“I am sure you will. See, the surgeon is trying to pour some spirit down my poor child’s throat. Now leave us.”

All this time Beresford had not spoken a word. I found him, as I passed, stationed close to the door. There was a light outside the hut now, as some of the party had kindled a fire in front of it, which threw its glare around for a considerable distance. All our party now assembled together; and it was agreed that we

should keep watch round the place during the night, and that at daybreak we should go in search of our neighbour. We made a diligent examination of the parts about, as we conjectured that the bush-rangers might have bound and gagged him, and left him at a distance from the hut; but we could find no traces of him or of them. With one accord I was chosen the leader of the present expedition, as being the oldest settler, and the one best acquainted with the bush. I had mustered my party with the view of allotting to them their different stations, when a cry from the hut arrested our attention, and young Beresford came running to us, and crying out,—

“She is saved! She is saved! She is alive! She is breathing! And now,” said he, “for her father; that’s the next thing to attend to. It’s the first inquiry she will make when she recovers her senses, and if she should suspect the worst, the consequences in her present state I am sure would be instantly fatal.”

“That is our object,” said I; “we must find the poor fellow. And now let us make our arrangements. There are twelve of us; I dare say we are strong enough to cope with the other party; for we have the right on our side, and that is a tower of strength. I propose that at break of day we should remove this family to my cottage. In the mean time it is necessary that we should prepare ourselves for bushing it, for some days perhaps. Let four men go to my cottage, and procure all the necessaries that we shall want, and don’t forget the kangaroo rugs, for the nights are cold, and we shall need them.”

“Don’t forget some brandy,” said one.

"Nor the tea and sugar," said another; "there's nothing like a cup of tea in the bush; it's more refreshing than all the spirits in the world."

"Bring plenty of pannikins," said a third; "one apiece will not be in the way."

"Take care to bring plenty of rice," said I; "it lies in a small compass, and is more handy for the bush than flour; but tell them at home to make as many small dampers as we can carry; and bring away all the baked bread in the house. My men will help you to carry the things."

"How are your powder-horns?" said young Beresford.

"Plenty of powder, but little shot."

"Ask for the bag of slugs and the little bag of balls, that hang by my bed's head," said I; "and bring a dozen or two of spare flints with you, and anything else that you think will be useful."

"Would it not be well," said one, "to give notice to the magistrates?"

"Right," said I, "who will volunteer to go over the plain this dark night, and tell the one farthest off?"

"That will I do," said a spirited young fellow; "I know every inch of the way; if I meet with anything, I will fire off my piece."

"You can tell one of my servants to apprise the other magistrate of this night's work, as his house is in a line from my cottage. If he is at home, he will be with us by daylight, you may depend on it; for he is young, and has no wife nor child, and he likes these expeditions. It may be useful, too, to have a magistrate among us to sanction our proceedings, so ask him to come with us, and

say that we should be obliged to him if he would be our leader; and you may as well say that no one could do it so well as himself. There's nothing like being civil, and we all like to be flattered a bit. Who knows what it is o'clock?"

"Not eleven yet."

"Then we have the whole night before us."

"And so have the bush-rangers; they may get well away before morning."

"No," said another; "it is impossible to travel fast on a night so dark as this. Let us have daylight before us, and get well on their tracks, and they can't escape us."

"Shall we try the dogs after them?"

"No; the kangaroo dogs are of no use as bloodhounds; they will track those they are used to for any distance, but they don't understand being set to track strangers. But we must take some dogs with us, for we shall want to pull more than one kangaroo for our dinners before we have done, I'm thinking."

"Here is one to begin with," said I, "as I felt a cold nose thrust into my hand. Hector and Fly are growing old now, but here's one of their breed, and here's another. They have found me out you see. Now let some one get two more, so that the four may not all belong to one party, in case of being separated. Shall we take any horses? I have three in the stable and four more in the bush that are sure to come for their corn in the morning. Perhaps they're in the open stable now, for they often come up and get under shelter when the nights are wet or cold."

It was agreed that four of the party should be

mounted, to act as scouts; but as it was likely that the marauders would choose the most inaccessible paths, where a horseman would be taken at great disadvantage, it was thought best that the rest of the party should be on foot.

"Take another horse, as a pack-horse," said one, "to carry our provisions, and let one of your men lead him."

"A bright thought!" said I, "and now I think we shall be well prepared for the bush; and so I recommend all to sleep as much as they can till daylight, that we may be the fresher for the work."

"Oh, never mind sleep; we are too much excited to sleep to-night; but let us have some supper."

"Will you come to my cottage, or stay here?"

"Oh, stay here; we will not leave the poor woman to-night; no, we'll sup here, and make a bush night of it to begin with; but it's terribly cold. There," said the speaker, throwing a heavy log on the fire, which made the sparks fly up like a fire-work; "there's some food for you; and there's another, and another. By George, we'll have a jolly fire, and make a merry night of it. I say, how's the young woman?"

Beresford required no further hint than these words; looking at me, I gave him a nod, and he disappeared in an instant. He tapped gently at the door of the hut, and returning to us immediately, whispered to me—

"She lives! she has not spoken; but she sleeps."

"Good," said I, "and now do you sleep too; we shall want all your strength to-morrow."

He smiled, and shook his head—"I will never sleep," said he, "till I have found her father."

“I do not doubt,” said I, “that you will spare no exertion to recover him; and now let us try to get some information about this sad affair. Is the mother cool enough to tell us her story? It would be a help to us to know something of the character and numbers of the party who attacked the hut. We should not lose any time by it, as it would be useless to start in pursuit of the bush-rangers till daylight. See if the poor lady can leave her daughter for a while; the surgeon can sit by her while the mother is away; and we ought to know all the particulars as well as she can tell them.”

Beresford went to the hut, and presently returned with Mrs. Moss, from whom we were happy to learn that her daughter still breathed and slept. We placed the afflicted lady on a log of wood before our bush-fire, and our sentinels being planted in suitable places, to guard against surprise, she described the attack in the following terms.

Chapter Twelfth.

The attack of the bush-rangers—The mysterious fate of the lost husband—It is resolved to pursue the bush-rangers—Preparations for the expedition—The magistrate heads the party—Horrible discovery.

I HARDLY know where to begin : I have very little to tell. It all seems now to have passed in a moment. We were sitting round the fire, I and my husband, and my poor Lucy, and the two children. Since we came up here, my husband always used to keep his gun in his hand, or else close by him, ready for use, for our greatest horror was these bush-rangers, and I don't know really whether I was most frightened to see him always carrying that eternal gun about with him, or to see him without it ; though it would have been but little protection against so many ! Perhaps it's all for the best. If he had fired, and killed one of them, it might have exasperated them, and they might have done worse. Well, we were assembled round the fire, as I said, and my husband was particularly cheerful ; he was sitting in the corner close to the window, with his gun leaning against the wall close to his hand, when he got up to close the shutter on the other side, as the wind was chilly.

It seems that we had been watched all the evening, and I suspect one of our men (we have only one man besides the shepherd) was a spy on us, for my husband

had left the corner where his gun was, only for a moment, when a man in a kangaroo jacket rushed into the room, and got between my husband and his weapon, which he seized hold of, and pointing his own gun at my husband, commanded him to throw up his hands over his head, or he would fire.

We were all in a cluster together, and my husband fearing, I dare say, that we might be wounded or killed, held up his arms. On this the bush-ranger threw his gun over his arm; but my husband in an instant rushed at him, and clasped him round the body. In the struggle, the bush-ranger's gun went off. But in the meantime more bush-ranger's had come; two of them immediately seized my husband from behind, and the first struck him over the head with the end of his gun, which I think stunned him for a time. They then bound him tightly hand to foot, and at the same time two of them held me and bound me also, and another man took hold of the children. Looking round, I missed Lucy, and guessed that she had escaped from the back window of her little bedroom. God help her! I hardly know whether to wish she may be restored to life and consciousness or not. But God's will be done!

Well, gentlemen, when they had bound my husband, they asked him where he had put his money; for being new settlers, we had been so imprudent as to bring nearly a thousand dollars with us, besides a little plate, and our watches, and other articles of value, of which no doubt the bush-rangers had information. My poor husband was scarcely recovered from the stunning blow of the bush-ranger's gun, but he declared that we had no money; that we were poor settlers, and had nothing with us but a few necessaries, such as flour and tea and sugar.

The man who had first pointed his gun at him, now placed it close to his head, and swore most horribly that if he did not instantly tell him where the money was hid, he would blow out his brains. This man seemed to be the leader.

"Money," said he, "we will have; we know you have got it, so tell us where it is, or"—and here he swore a dreadful oath—"you shall have the contents of this barrel through your brains."

I was held by two men, who had tied a handkerchief over my mouth, and it was in vain that I struggled to get loose. The bush-ranger put his finger on the lock of his gun, and I heard a click; I knew well what the click meant. In another instant I expected to behold my poor husband's head shattered to pieces. With a desperate strength, which nothing but despair could have lent to me, I loosened one arm, and tearing the handkerchief from my mouth, I exclaimed, "Oh! tell them, tell them! For God's sake tell them!—life is better than money . . ."

"Oh—ho!" said the leader, "so there is money, after all. Then I think I'll find a way to get it. Here," he said to one of the men, "put your musket close to this gentleman's head; that's right—now cock it—now put your finger on the trigger, and if he offers to cry out—fire! And now for the lady. Just put the handkerchief over her mouth again, and this time take care she doesn't get it off again; a woman can't hold her tongue, though her husband's brains may be blown out from her talking. In the meantime, ma'am," said he, with a sort of mock politeness, "I'll trouble you to walk into the inner room. I should not like to shock a lady's nerves,

nor a gentleman's neither, with what is usual in these cases."

"I will not move," said I, horrified at his words. "I will not move; I will not leave my husband and my children. Kill me, if you will, but here I will stay."

"By no means," said the mocking bush-ranger; "we never wish to kill anybody if we can help it, that's not our game; but if you will not walk, you must be carried."

The two men who held me then lifted me up in an instant, and carried me into the bedroom, where they threw me on the bed.

"Now," said the leader, "is the lady put comfortably to bed?"

"Ay, ay," said the man who held me down; "we've got her tight enough."

"You see," he said to my husband, for I could hear him speak plainly, as the two rooms are separated only by the log partition, "you see how things are; you had better tell at once, before we proceed to further extremities."

Extreme terror and faintness had kept me silent till this moment, but now fear for my husband and my children, as well as the horror of my own condition, overcame all other feelings, and I cried out, "I'll tell! I'll tell! Don't fire! Take up the stone before the hearth—the money is there."

The leader immediately desired some one outside to bring a strong stake to lift up the stone, telling him to be quick, for they had no time to lose, as they had far to travel before morning. Then I heard them remove the stone, and the dollars chinked as the man pulled out the bag and threw it on the floor. The sight of the

heavy bag and the sound of the money, I fancy, put the party in good humour, for the men who held me relaxed their hold, and one left, telling the other not to lose sight of me.

Presently I heard the leader say—

“Where’s the young girl?”

No one seemed to know.

“By ——,” said he, the young hussy has escaped, and she will give the alarm. Be quick, my men, quick—quick; leave nothing behind that you can carry away—blankets, sheets, clothes—everything. We shall want them when we get to the lake. It’s a pity, though, that the girl has escaped. She will set her father free, and that may be awkward for us. Stay; we’ll take him with us, and then he can’t give any information about us.”

“To shoot him is the shortest way,” said one.

“Hang him,” said another. “Chuck him into the river, and there he’ll be snug till somebody finds him.”

“Don’t stand talking about it,” said a third; “shooting him would give the alarm, and throwing him into the river is unnecessary trouble. Just lend me a bit of cord, or a silk handkerchief, and I’ll warrant he’ll be quiet enough after.”

I conjectured he was about to strangle my helpless husband, for I heard the leader say—

“Stop!—no murder, if we can help it. We can do that with him at any time, if his living is likely to harm us. For the present we will take him with us. Loose his legs and bind his arms behind his back. And now let us be off. But first let us make the lady safe.”

I was taken accordingly into the sitting-room; and then they bound me fast, and left me as you found me. My

husband had been silent all this time, with the object, no doubt, which he carried into effect when he was removed outside the hut. When he found himself on the outside, where his voice could be heard, he immediately set up a loud shout for help, that made the woods ring; he was answered by screams near the river, which proceeded, I do not doubt, from Lucy. My husband's cries were instantly silenced.

"Gag him!" cried out a voice.

"Let us knock that young vixen on the head before we go," said another voice; "she will rouse the neighbourhood, and our plan will be defeated."

"It's too late," said the leader; "the alarm is given already. It would do us no good to put the girl out of the way now; we should only lose time; we must be quick, and place a good distance between us, before we can be pursued. We shall gain a march, for we cannot be tracked till daylight; but we can travel all night, and so get well ahead."

With that they left me, threatening me and my children with instant death if I uttered the least sound of alarm. I think I must have fainted; for I remember nothing more, till I was aroused by the door of the hut being burst open, which the bush-rangers, I suppose, before they left, had fastened on the outside.

"How many in number," said I, "do you think they were?"

"I cannot tell; I think there must have been eight or ten at one time in the hut; at the same time I heard the voices of some outside. All those whom I saw were armed with a gun of some sort. They were very wild-

looking; the leader had on a kangaroo-skin jacket, and he did not look very ferocious, but he was very determined."

"It was your husband's and your daughter's cries," said I, "that we heard on the other side of the river, and it is plain, from your story, that your daughter endeavoured to cross the river for help, but was terrified by the roar of the waters and the difficulty of the passage, and that, overcome with exhaustion, she fell into the fit on the trunk of the tree in which we found her. Let that fortunate escape," added I, "inspire you with a hope that we may be successful in finding your husband uninjured."

The lady then returned to her daughter; and our companions, who had gone on their several missions, having returned, we passed the remainder of the night by the fire, planning our next day's expedition, and giving and receiving mutual information on the best course to be pursued, and the likeliest track of the bush-rangers.

The day had just begun to break, when we were cheered by the appearance of the young magistrate on horseback, with a servant and two friends also mounted, and two constables on foot. They were all well armed; and when he had communicated to us the intelligence which he had received in the night of the numbers and desperation of the bush-rangers, we were not a little glad to be joined by such an efficient reinforcement. The magistrate immediately took on himself the conduct of the expedition; and his activity and determination were so well known, that all the party were happy to place themselves under his direction.

The plundered family having been first removed with the greatest care to my house, the poor young lady showing no other sign of life than a low breathing, we lost no time in putting ourselves in order. The magistrate divided our body into two parties, entrusting the command of one party to me, and the other to young Beresford. As the four horses brought by our last reinforcement were sufficient for the purposes of scouts, the remainder of the party proceeded on foot, so that each of our parties, Beresford and mine, consisted of seven, including ourselves. With these preliminary dispositions we set about searching for the track of the bush-rangers, extending ourselves in a line, the better to cover the ground. The track was soon found, as the large body of the bush-rangers, laden with their booty, could not conceal the marks of their passage.

"Stick to the track," said our leader to the constable who acted as guide, "and let nothing distract you from it. Gentlemen," said he, addressing us, "I shall leave on the track all those on foot, who I trust will be ready for action. I and one of my friends will gallop on for some distance towards the tall tree on the high hill yonder, and try the chance of coming up with the rascals. Two of the horsemen will scour the country on your flanks. We are only eighteen in number, and the bush-rangers are reported to have more than thirty among them. But we are in a better state of efficiency than they can be. Take care not to throw away your fire. Now, we will go and clear the way for you." Saying this, he galloped off in the direction to which the track of the bush-rangers seemed to lead us.

We continued our course warily but rapidly for about

ten miles, when we found the magistrate and his three companions waiting for us at the spot where two tracks were distinctly visible. We had scarcely exchanged a few words, when the horseman to our left galloped into view, and made silent but expressive signs for us to come to him. He motioned us to be cautious, and to look about us. I beckoned to the horseman on our right to join us, and, leaving him as a sentinel to mark the point of the track from which we had been called off, we moved quickly to our left, and soon reached the spot to which the horseman had called. Here our eyes were suddenly arrested by a spectacle which caused us all instinctively to throw forward our arms, and gaze anxiously around us. The sight chilled our very blood, and was sufficient to strike the boldest among us with consternation and horror.

Chapter Thirteenth.

The ruins of the burnt Stock-keeper's hut—The murderer Musquito and the Natives—The sagacity of the Kangaroo dogs—Native's tomb—The Natives begin an attack—Skirmish with the Bush-rangers.

AMIDST the ruins of a stock-keeper's hut, recently burned down, we beheld a form which we recognized as human only from the outline of the body. One arm was totally consumed; the other was shrivelled up. The body was literally roasted and charred. It was in vain, after we had recovered the first emotions which the horrid sight created, that we endeavoured to trace the features of the disfigured head; it was a shapeless mass of calcined bone. The clothes, which might have served to identify it, were, of course, utterly consumed.

It must not be supposed that in making this examination we were neglectful of our own safety. Our active magistrate immediately despatched the two unemployed horsemen, to make circuits of discovery round the place, and while he, with one of the constables, made a close investigation of the ruins, the remainder of our little party stood in order with our arms prepared in readiness to meet any attack. Our first impression was, that the hut had been visited by the bush-rangers, who either in malice or revenge, had set fire to the hut, and burned to death the unfortunate occupant. But the truth was pre-

sently made manifest by one of the horsemen, who hailed us from a little distance, to join him.

We proceeded towards the spot where he was standing, and we presently came on two dead bodies, evidently stock-keepers from their clothes and appearance. They were quite dead and cold. Their wounds at once informed us that they had been killed by the natives. On laying bare their clothes, we found their bodies pierced with innumerable small holes caused by the long, thin spears used by the natives in their encounters. Their heads were battered to a jelly-like mass, from the frequent blows of the waddies, a small and light club of hard wood, which forms the weapon of the natives of Australia, in close combat.

The sickening sight of these two bodies, coupled with the horrid form amidst the ruins of the hut, told plainly what had happened. The stock-keepers had been attacked by the natives, who had, no doubt, intercepted the two unfortunate men before us, and had killed them after a hard fight, as the number of their wounds testified. The third stock-keeper, it seemed, had been able to gain the hut, in which, perhaps, he had defended himself for some time against the natives; and the black people had set fire to the thatch of native grass, and so consumed it and him. We searched again, and more narrowly amongst the charcoal ruins, and found the barrel of a musket partially melted by the fire, with the lock nearly whole, and the piece of brass belonging to the butt of the piece. This was confirmation of our surmise. The stock-keeper in the hut had very likely wounded or killed one or more of the natives, and they, rendered more savage by their wounds, had burnt him alive!

At this time a native of Australia, by name Musquito, a tall and powerful man, had been committing many atrocities in Van Diemen's Land. He had been sent from Sydney some years before for an offence, I think it was murder, that he had committed, by Governor Macquarie, a proceeding complained of at the time, but gradually forgotten, as Musquito, until within the last year or so, had conducted himself well, and had proved himself useful on several occasions, by tracking runaway convicts, and lost or stolen sheep. It was known that he was at the head of a mob of natives, consisting of about thirty; but we had no idea that he was in this part of the island; however, this looked very like some of his work, and we were not a little troubled at the prospect of having to contend against the treacherous natives as well as with the fierce and desperate bush-rangers. This was an addition to our difficulties and our danger on which we had not calculated, and the magistrate called a council of war to deliberate on the best mode of proceeding.

We took advantage of the opportunity of this halt to refresh ourselves, as we anticipated hard work. On the hearth of the demolished hut we found a tripod, such as was in common use then, and now too for boiling things in, holding three or four gallons. One of the constables cleaned it out to make tea in. There were many of the shrubs known by the name of the tea-tree growing near, and as we wished to husband our stock, we made tea of some of the leaves, which make a very good substitute for the China tea. The leaf resembles the leaf of the privet, which is common in the hedges in some parts of England. In the meanwhile some of our party buried

the two dead stock-keepers, after having first examined their clothes narrowly, to see if we could find any paper or marks by which they could be identified. On one we found a tin tobacco-box, which was given in charge to one of the constables, and on the other was his pass, from which we ascertained his name, and also that he had recently arrived from Hobart Town.

All this time we took care to guard against surprise, for we did not know who might be watching us, but we felt no fear from an open attack of any body of natives that could be collected against us; but if by chance Musquito and his mob of natives should join with the bush-rangers, we felt that such a body of sixty or more persons, with the bush-rangers well armed and desperate, might be more than we could cope with. These considerations troubled us all not a little, and we made haste to despatch our meal, keeping a strict lookout the while.

Our banquet was not a very merry one, I must say; we all had very long faces, with some slight misgivings of the prudence of our expedition; not that there was any want of courage among us, or of the spirit of enterprise; we were bold and cool enough; but some of us had left wives and families behind, and we felt that we were fighting against odds; that we were risking our own lives, which were precious, against the lives of rascals which were worthless.

These thoughts, with the burial of the dead and disfigured men, and the sight of the other man burnt into charcoal, cast a gloom over us which was painful and dispiriting. Our kangaroo dogs went smelling about with their tails down, and crouching with that expres-

sion of fear which these hounds display when they are in the vicinity of an unusual object, and especially when they see or smell a native. One of them poked about the ruins, and startled us with a howl so dismal that it almost chilled us with a sort of superstitious fear.

"Young Hector is uneasy," said one.

"He knows there's something wrong," said another; "and he can't make out what that charcoal body means. I don't think he has much spirit in him just now to pull a kangaroo."

Hector, however, suddenly belied this surmise, for, ascending the little eminence above the ruins, he assumed an attitude of lively and fixed attention. His head became erect, his eyes keenly piercing into the bush, and his body ready for a spring.

"Silence," said I; "Hector has got scent of something; I know his ways well. See, he looks at me, to intimate that there is something in the wind. Go see," said I; "see, Hector, good dog, what is it?"

The intelligent animal immediately set off into the bush stealthily, and without barking or growling. He was soon out of sight.

"It's only a kangaroo," said one of the constables.

"It's more than a kangaroo," said I; "Hector is almost equal to his old sire, who could do everything but speak, and indeed I think he could have talked, if he only knew how to begin; but I understand his signs well. Depend upon it, there's a reason for what he does."

As I spoke these words, we observed the dog cantering back to us at a swift pace. He came straight up to me, and whined with peculiar signs of fear.

"He has seen a native," said I; "that I'll swear. I can't mistake him. We had better be prepared, though I can't think they would have the temerity to attack us."

"Let us go and face the danger," said our young leader; "it is better to put an end to it one way or the other, as to retreating, that is out of the question."

"Oh," said we all,—"no retreat, no retreat!"

"Then put yourselves in order, gentlemen, and let us move on."

"Let us follow the dog," said I, "and go warily about it; these natives hide behind the trees, and you can hear nothing of them till you find a spear sticking in you. Keep the other dogs back, and let me and Hector go first. Now, Hector, good dog; where is it?"

Hector licked my hand, as if to say, "take care of yourself," and trotted on before. I kept immediately behind, taking care not to over-run him, and the rest of our party followed quickly after us, on the alert, and with their arms ready. Hector continued at his trotting pace for about two hundred and fifty yards, when he stopped, and assumed the attitude of a dog pointing at game. I tried to pierce into the bush with my eyes, but I could discover nothing. I looked back, and saw my party behind, all ready for action.

"Go see!" I said to the dog.

The dog hung down his tail, sniffed, whined, and standing up, pawed me with his fore-legs.

I patted him.

"What is it, Hector?"

But some terror hung over the hound, and he was reluctant to move forward; but he looked towards a parti-

cular part of the bush, and uttered the low whine expressive of unusual fear."

The magistrate now, leaving the others behind, joined me.

"What is the matter with the dog?" said he.

"I can't tell," said I; "but there is some reason for all this; I'm sure there are natives about by his manner; if they were bush-rangers he would bark or growl."

"We must put an end to this suspense," said the magistrate; "observe him now, he is looking intensely at some object not far off. Stand here, and hold my horse, and I will go on the line the dog points to."

He immediately advanced on foot, having first observed the bearing of an object behind me, in order that he might keep in a line straight to the point to which the dog's eye was directed. In the meantime the party behind came up to where I stood, and we all held ourselves ready for an alarm. The magistrate had not advanced far before he stopped, and looking cautiously around him, holding his fowling-piece in a position to fire, and without turning his head, beckoned with his arm for us to advance.

We came up to him, and he silently pointed to a hollow and blackened trunk of a tree, the branches of which were still standing, and covered with the late autumn leaf. Within the trunk we saw standing up a native, with his face turned towards us. The blackness of his colour assimilating with the charcoal of the burned tree prevented the body from being distinguished from the blackened trunk, until we got close to it, but the acuteness of the hound's organs had enabled him to detect this object at a considerable distance. The sight of this na-

tive lurking within the body of the tree instantly filled us with the fear that there were more close at hand, and we expected every moment to receive a volley of spears from the hidden enemy; but none appeared, and all was silence; the dogs, however, showed symptoms of uneasiness, which made us look about us.

"Shall I fire?" said one of the constables; "it's a sure shot."

"Stop," said the magistrate; "let us try to take him alive; we have got him safe; he can't get through the back of the tree, and we hem him in at the front. But it's odd that he doesn't move."

We were about thirty yards from the tree, but as the native was within the trunk, we could not discern in the obscurity more than his dusky body; the trees were very thick all round, forming a dense mass of trunks as close as they could grow. It was a favourable place for the natives to fight in, and they are so active, and so clever in hiding themselves, that you may be in the midst of hundreds in such a place without being able to catch a sight of one of them.

"I'll put an end to this," said the magistrate; "be ready, my friends, and don't let him escape."

Saying this, he ran towards him with his fowling-piece pointed towards the tree.

"Why, he's dead! and we have come upon a native's grave; I have heard of them, but never saw one before. This is one of the black fellows that the stock-keeper shot, no doubt, before he was burnt to death in the hut."

On examining the body, we found the mark of the musket-ball that had gone through his heart and passed out at his back. He was most likely close to the hut

when he was shot, and must have been killed instantaneously.

We were clustering round the tree, gazing at this sight, and a little off our guard, when a whirr was heard among us, and a long thin spear passing through the group of heads without wounding any one, stuck in the bark of the tree. We were quickly roused by this compliment, and we turned about, looking round on all sides; but we could see nothing. Presently we heard the tramp of a horse's feet, and a crashing through the bushes, and the horseman whom we had left as a sentinel came into view. A spear was sticking in his back, and two pieces of broken spears were sticking in the sides of the horse, which seemed maddened with fright and pain. It was with difficulty that the rider could direct his horse towards us, the animal being almost unmanageable.

"Look out!" he cried; "the natives are on us—I have not seen them; but they have marked me and my horse. Depend upon it they are joined by the bush-rangers, or they would not think of attacking an armed man on horseback. Musquito is with them you may be sure, and he has taught them that the danger is over when a fire-arm is discharged; I dropped mine when this spear struck me. It came on me unawares; and, in catching at the bridle when the horse started, I dropped my piece. I am not much hurt; but this spear makes me smart a bit."

"Oh never mind a spear wound," said our young magistrate; "we have got a surgeon among us, so we are all right."

While these words were passing, we had secured the horse, and our friend dismounted. The spear had penetrated the flesh under his right arm, and the point was

sticking out of the wound three or four inches on the other side. It was a small spear, about ten feet long. The end had been sharpened and hardened in the fire, by scorching it, according to the custom of the natives, and it formed an ugly weapon to be lodged in a gentleman's person. The two constables quickly drew out the pieces of broken spear from the horse's side; they found more than a dozen spear-holes in the horse's body, which bled freely, but none of them seemed to be deep, except two. All this passed in less than half a minute; and we were all the time looking out for an attack, but could not guess from which quarter it would come. We stood in this way for several minutes, straining our eyes to discover our enemies, but in vain. Suddenly our young leader, who was sitting on horseback, cried out—

“Holloa, they're at me!”

We turned and looked. A spear had gone through his hat sideways, and knocked it off; but we could see no one.

“That was a good shot,” said one of us. “Perhaps the next may be better—look out!”

A shower of spears fell among us from the same quarter, hitting one of the constables, and wounding another. As the distance, however, was great, they did little more than penetrate the skin, and a laugh was raised at the expense of the sufferers. The parties speared, however, did not appear to enjoy the joke at all.

“It's of no use,” said one of them, “to stand here to serve as targets for these black rascals; let us make a rush into the bush, and come to close quarters.”

“They will not let you,” said our leader; “you have no chance against them that way; but we must do some-

thing. We must try to drive them through this belt of wood, and get them into the plain beyond, where we shall be able to see what we are about. But we must be very cool, and very cautious. Take three of your party," said he to me, "to the left; and do you, Beresford, take three of yours to the right, so as to slant the black rascals, and drive them from the trees. Take care to keep us in sight, and don't advance too far. The rest must advance steadily straight on; I and the two on horseback will be ready to give assistance to either party."

We lost no time in effecting this movement, and proceeded at a brisk pace through the wood. Beresford's party had the first shot:—the natives moved round to the other side of the trees; then we had a shot at them; and in front was our main body. They could not stand this long; they did throw some spears at us, but they fell harmless. They scampered off, in number about thirty or forty, as near as we could guess, and we after them, till they came to the edge of the bank bounding the wood, over which they disappeared.

We were hastening after them, when suddenly thirty or forty armed men started up from beneath the bank, and fired a volley on us, which brought us to a standstill. We were all in a line, separated, but not far from each other, the chase after the natives having caused us to break our ranks. I looked down our line when the volley was fired, and it was with the most painful concern that I saw my young friend Beresford drop to the ground.

It was clear that the natives had formed a junction with the bush-rangers, and our little party now stood in their presence, with fearful odds against us, and with

three of us disabled. Thus fairly brought into action, we had nothing to trust to but our courage and discipline, and the moral superiority which the right has over the wrong. The bush-rangers, after their first volley, had disappeared under the bank. Our leader instantly called out, "Reserve your fire—close together—now follow me."

Chapter Fourteenth.

The Bush-rangers retreat—The Magistrate's party pursue—A Bivouac—Tracks of the Bush-rangers—Crossing of the big river—The pursuit grows warm.

WE immediately turned to the right to a point about fifty yards off, where there was a clump of trees which projected from the main mass of the forest. By this manœuvre we turned the position of the bush-rangers, which at first was in their favour, to our own advantage, as it enabled us to take them along their line, so that they stood in one another's way; and while they were unprotected in the open plain, we were sheltered by the trunks of the trees.

As I followed with my division of the party, I passed poor Beresford, whom I had seen fall at the first volley of the bush-rangers. Raising him up, we bore him to the shelter of the wood. Our present position enabled us now to see the movements of the bush-rangers. It was not their game to fight, only to disable and embarrass the pursuit; we were not surprised, therefore, though I must confess I felt considerably relieved, to behold the bush-rangers in rapid retreat stealing under the bank.

Perhaps it would have been prudent in us, seeing their numbers and determination, and assisted by a harassing body of natives, to have let them alone, and to have suffered them to retire without molestation.

But our blood was up, and as I have often observed on other occasions, there seems to be a fighting instinct in human nature, so that two men, or two bodies of men, when they have got opposite each other with the intent of fighting, do not like to separate without exchanging blows.

These thoughts occurred afterwards, for I was as hot as any of us at the time, and as eager to continue the pursuit. The sight, too, of our neighbour fired us. We saw him amidst his plunderers, with his hands tied before him, and goaded on by two or three of them. We were all going helter-skelter after them, when we were stopped by the voice of our young leader, who was the coolest among us.

"Stop, gentlemen," said he; "we must not go too fast. Remember that our lives are precious, and it is my duty not to allow you to expose yourselves unnecessarily. I am afraid these rascals are too strong for us. You may observe that the natives seem to be confident in their numbers. We are only eighteen in number, and our enemies are at least sixty or seventy. I make no doubt that a party of soldiers which the Government has directed to the Clyde, will follow our steps, and they can easily track us to where we are. My advice to you is to wait here till that help reaches us; then we shall be a match for them."

"No waiting," cried out one bold young fellow; "let us go at them while we are in the humour for it. Those rascals will never fight when it comes to the scratch; let us make a rush at them, and put an end to it."

"If you will allow me to give my advice," said I, "I am of the same opinion as our magistrate. We

ought to endeavour to take these fellows alive ; it would be a dear victory if we were to buy it at the expense of many of our own lives."

"Oh ! let us fight it out now," cried several ; " why, these bush-rangers will be joined by more convicts, depend on it, as they go on. Let us crush them at once, before they get to a strength too much for us to put down."

"Well," said the magistrate, "if you are determined to go on with this job, I will not disappoint you ; but we must use a little stratagem in our proceedings. It is now four o'clock ; in a few hours it will be dark, when, you know, the natives will not stir, for they are afraid of the evil spirit which they believe wanders about in the night-time. I propose, then, that we should remain where we are for two hours, so as to make the bush-rangers think, if they watch us, that we have given up the pursuit. Then we must track them to their resting-place for the night, and so surprise them asleep or off their guard, for our object is to secure them alive, and to rescue our friend from their hands, with as little risk as possible to ourselves. Are you agreed ?"

"Agreed," said we all.

"Then now let us lose no time in attending to young Beresford."

We were all glad to find, on examination, that Beresford had only been stunned by a ball which had grazed his head ; there was not much bleeding from the wound, but as the blood had flowed down his face, which was pale as death, it gave him a ghastly appearance. In less than half an hour he was sufficiently recovered to sit up, but he complained of headache, and weakness of the limbs.

"Do you think you could keep up with us?" said our leader.

"I'll try," said he, "and at any rate you shall not be stopped on my account. I would rather stay behind."

"And be speared by the natives," said I, "which you certainly would be. No—no; if we go on, you must go with us, if we have to carry you, for our party is too weak to be divided."

"And now, gentlemen, pray make the best use of your time. Rest yourselves; and while you have the opportunity, put your arms in order, and I recommend you to put new flints in your hammers. It is half the battle to have your weapons in good order. We shall have the advantage of the bush-rangers there, for their muskets must be rusty, and out of order."

We set ourselves about the work accordingly, and put our arms in good condition, keeping a good lookout the while, but we were not molested. At the end of two hours, one of the horsemen was despatched on the track of the enemy, and after him another to keep the first in view, and to communicate with the main body. The third wounded horse we feared would be of little use, so he was turned loose in the bush, and his saddle and bridle stowed away in the fork of a tree, and covered over with bark to keep it dry. His rider's wound was a little stiffish, but he said he should be all right if it came to a brush, and he got warmed to the work.

Our party was divided as before. I had the direction of six men, and Beresford of six more. The dismounted horseman made Beresford's party amount to seven. Our leader, who was well mounted, made excursions of observation on either side.

IN this order we proceeded on the track of the bush-rangers till the dusk of the evening, when we made another halt. Planting sentinels around, whom we relieved at stated times, we remained in this position till midnight. We then resumed our march in Indian file, calculating that we should reach the resting-place of the bush-rangers at three or four o'clock in the morning, at which time the slumber of sleepers is most profound.

But we found that we had overrated our powers of tracking; we had not proceeded half a mile before we were brought to a stand-still; we had lost the track, and in the obscurity of the night we found it impossible to recover it. We remained, therefore, where we were, afraid to light a fire, lest we should reveal our position. We made cautious excursions to the right and left, in the hope of discovering our enemies from the light of their fire; but we could see nothing, and the night passed away in one of the most disagreeable bivouacs I ever witnessed. We contrived the best supper that we could in the dark, and those who could got some sleep.

At the first dawn of light we were up and stirring, but it was a good half-hour before we could recover the lost track. The morning was hazy and raw, and we all felt that it was anything but a pleasurable expedition that we were engaged in. I have often admired how much difference a good night's rest and a good supper make on the capabilities of a man; it is in vain that enthusiasm lends its aid to support us in arduous undertakings; man, after all, depends much on his physical condition, and the old proverb of an English soldier being in the best fighting condition after a good dinner, I have had frequent opportunities to test the truth of.

On we went with very long faces, and very blue noses, for about three miles, when we came to a brook about twenty feet wide, and not very deep, to the border of which our track led. The walk, or rather the trot, had warmed us up a bit, and, without any hesitation, we all dashed into it. It was nearly up to our middle, and the stream ran very strong, but we crossed it merrily. Proceeding onwards, the track led us to the summit of a green hill, at which point it appeared the bush-rangers had taken a sudden resolution, for the track now proceeded at a right angle from the old one, and, after following it for a couple of miles, we found ourselves on the bank of the Shannon River.

Here we were a little at fault, for the stream was too deep and too rapid to be forded, and we were not sufficiently ingenious to construct an extempore canoe from the bark of a tree, as the natives of New South Wales are accustomed to do. On the other side of the river, which was about sixty yards wide, was a stock-keeper's hut, which looked as if it had been abandoned, so desolate and wretched was its appearance.

The tracks on our side of the river were quite fresh, and it was evident that a body of men had recently crossed at the spot where we stood. Our leader despatched the two constables to the right and left to make discoveries; but they returned, after the lapse of an hour, with the report that they could find no means of crossing the river, and that they had discovered no track.

After similar explorations on all sides, we were compelled to come to the conclusion that they had crossed the river at the point where we were standing, but how they had done it was the puzzle. There was no sign of

any living creature on the opposite bank, and the stock-hut, from its roofless condition, and the general aspect of things about it, seemed to have been long since abandoned. It was in vain that we held a council of war; no one could help us out of our difficulty; there was the deep river between us and our enemy, and there we might stay for ever, if we waited till it had done flowing.

“Let us cross the river higher up,” said one, “till we come to a place that is fordable.”

“Lord bless you!” said one of the constables; “you will find no ford on the Shannon. It’s the most ram-bustious river in the whole colony, and always goes ramping and roaring along as if it were in the most terrible hurry in the world to get over the ground. It’s quite a speck to cross it on horseback, unless your horse is a real good one, and in the dry season. But, what do I see there? Look! Don’t you see a little sort of a punt behind those sedges? It is a punt! Depend upon it, the bush-rangers crossed by that thing.”

We all gazed anxiously; and, sure enough, there was a something about six feet long, and how wide we could not tell, which looked like an outlandish wash-tub set to soak, and which might, by a vivid stretch of the imagination, be likened to a punt.

• “Well,” said the magistrate, “we will not be stopped by the Shannon, or by anything else, in doing what we have a mind to. The horse that I am on will do anything that a horse can do, and I will make the attempt. Do you, gentlemen, draw yourselves up so as to protect my crossing, in case of enemies lying on the bank opposite, and I will try what Diamond can do.”

With that he was about to urge his horse into the water, when the constable called out—

"Stop, sir, stop! You don't understand the strength of the stream, or you would not attempt to cross straight over. You must go up a hundred yards or so, and you will find the force of the current will not allow you to land on the other side nearer than the point opposite. Better say a hundred and fifty yards up, and pray take care to keep your horse's head well up the stream, or you will be turned over in no time."

"Thank you," said the magistrate, "for your counsel. I always listen to the advice of old hands."

Taking the stream at about a hundred and fifty yards to the right, he plunged in, taking a little leap from the bank. He went under water as high as his waist, but it was only for a moment, for as he leaped his horse against the stream, the force of the current, aided by the exertions of the horse in an opposite direction, buoyed him up directly. He had taken the precaution of holding his fowling-piece in his hand above his head, so that his weapon escaped damage.

The action and struggle of the horse, guided by a practised hand, were beautiful. The rampant stream swept on with a sort of fury, as if ravenous for the prey upon its bosom, but our young leader, as cool as if he was on the high road, with his fowling-piece raised high out of the reach of the spray of the waters, held on his course, undismayed by the rushing waters.

It was a short course and a dangerous one, for the utmost efforts of the noble and powerful animal, whose energies were called forth to battle the impetuous current of the famed Shannon River, were barely sufficient to enable him to reach the landing-place. But he did reach it, and our breathless suspense was allayed by a

success which, during its progress, seemed all but impossible.

He waved his gun to us when he was safe, and we replied by a cheer, forgetting our habitual caution, and the necessity of silence in a bush expedition. We then observed him ascend the bank, and approach the ruined hut. Some argument that he made use of was irresistible, for presently, to our great surprise, we saw a man emerge from the building in the usual habiliment of a sojourner in the bush, that is, a kangaroo jacket.

This detected individual proceeded with some alacrity, partly prompted by his desire to assist his fellow creatures in crossing the stream, and partly, I suspected, by the persuasive influence of the magistrate's gun, which I observed to be most pertinaciously pointed at the head of this inhabitant of the Shannon, to the place where the washing-tub punt was moored under the bank. Something that the magistrate said to him seemed to have the effect of making him redouble his exertions.

Having taken his place in the punt, he proceeded to creep up the bank, sometimes propelling his frail boat by a sort of oar, and sometimes catching hold over the shrubs and inequalities of the bank. Having obtained the requisite distance to enable him to shoot the passage, he used his paddles with the most commendable vivacity, stimulated, perhaps, by the sight of a tolerable number of gun-barrels ready to inflict instant punishment on any vacillation or treachery, and quickly came to land a little above the spot where we were standing. When we saw this nondescript species of craft, we were amazed at any one trusting himself to such a speculative attempt at navigation. We looked at the punt, and we looked at

one another, but no one offered to take his seat in this novel addition to the transport service.

"Now, Worrall," said one of the constables to the other, "you're the man to set the example. Did'nt you cross the Derwent once in a bark canoe when you were —"

"Hold your tongue," said Worrall; "if I was a fool once, it's no reason why I should be a fool again. Get into it yourself with your fat carcass, and then perhaps there will be one rogue less in the world."

"Not cross in my punt!" said the Columbus of Van Diemen's Land; "why there's no danger at all. There *was* a stock-keeper last week who crossed, that is, who would have crossed if he had not been so obstinate. He *would* lift up his head as he was lying at the bottom of the punt, and of course it upset, and I got a wetting, and was very near losing my punt. But it was his own fault that he was drowned. Now, misters, who comes first?"

No one seemed at all inclined to "come first," and there were whisperings about wives and families, and the first duty of a man, and such like. Meanwhile the magistrate on the other side, was making earnest gestures for us to join him, and I felt that it was necessary for some one to take a decisive part, so I stepped forward with the intention of making the first trial. But the gallant young Beresford anticipated me, and, without saying a word, he placed himself in the punt, and the man of the river pursuing the same process of crawling up the side of the stream by which he had reached us, landed him safely on the other side. This put us all on our mettle, and it was not who should shrink from the risk, but who should go first, that was now the question.

I have often thought since of the hazard of this crossing; and wondered how we escaped; but so it was; we all crossed over in safety, and leaving a couple of sentinels on the outside, we all entered the hut.

We were wet, and cold, and tired. The sight of glowing embers, therefore, on the hearth was very cheering. We quickly provoked the fire to a blaze, and enjoyed the warmth with unusual satisfaction. There was a tripod on the fire, in which we immediately made tea for the party, for tea is always cherished as the grand restorer of fatigue in bush excursions; spirit heats and debilitates, but tea refreshes and strengthens; such is the experience of all in Van Diemen's Land. I don't know whether porter or ale might not do as well, or better; but porter and ale are not to be found in the bush, and they are commodities too bulky to be carried about with you; so that the universal ingredient is tea; and a rough looking stock-keeper, in appearance something between a bear and a badger, talks of his tea with the same gusto as an old woman at a Scotch christening. With tea, then, we made our bush breakfast, and as we were all particularly well pleased with our own courage in crossing the river, we were in high spirits.

We endeavoured to ascertain from the occupant of the hut something of the condition and probable route of the bush-rangers, but this ambiguous individual protested most vehemently that he had seen nothing of them, and that how the marks of the footsteps came which we pointed out to him surpassed his comprehension!

We knew that this was a lie, and some of us were strongly inclined to shoot him on the spot, to prevent

his giving information about us; but the magistrate prevailed on us to postpone this summary mode of execution till we came back, observing that shooting was too good for him, and that he would certainly come to be hanged without our taking the trouble to interfere in expediting so desirable a consummation. Having refreshed ourselves and dried our clothes, and having carefully examined our locks and ammunition, we proceeded gaily on the track of the enemy.

Chapter Fifteenth.

Arrival at the great lake—Bush-rangers at bay—The Fight—Simultaneous attack of the Natives—Matters remain in suspense—Thornley looks out for a Kangaroo for supper.

WE followed the track, but we could not come up with the bush-rangers. We kept on for about twenty miles over a rough and difficult country, crossing the big river by a ford, till we came to the foot of a tier of hills too steep for a fatigued party to encounter. Here we made a halt for the night. The next morning we continued the pursuit. When we reached the top of the tier, we beheld in the bottom before us the wide and beautiful lake then known by the name of Arthur's Lake.

The scene was beautiful beyond description. The morning broke clear and bright, and the sharp mountain air was exhilarating and exciting. Behind us was a romantic country of undulating hill and dale, and before us were the tranquil waters of the great lake. We were all struck with the impressive character of the scene, and for some minutes we were silent.

"How beautiful and quiet the lake looks," said our leader, "with the morning sun lighting it up; it seems a pity to disturb such a place with sounds and acts of blood and battle, but I have a notion that we shall hem in the bush-rangers on the borders of that lake, and then, when we bring them to bay, we may prepare for a

desperate struggle. Now, gentlemen, if you have satisfied your love for the picturesque, we will move on."

As well as we could calculate, we were about four miles from the margin of the lake, and we proceeded at a tolerably rapid pace, following the track of the bush-rangers till we came to its banks. Here, it seems, they had come to a halt, and were doubtful how to proceed; for the shore was much trampled by men walking to and fro. We did not stop long, for, observing that the track led to the left, we followed it. It seemed that the bush-rangers were undetermined how to proceed, for they followed the winding of the margin of the lake for some distance, when, suddenly quitting that course, their track led direct to a point of the lake where some cedar-trees grew on a tongue of land stretching into the lake about a quarter of a mile.

As we proceeded, we observed a smoke to arise from the extremity of this point, which we had no doubt was the fire of the bush-rangers. After our long and toilsome pursuit, we hailed this indicator of the refuge of the bush-rangers with joy and satisfaction, although with a secret consciousness that the end was not to be attained without a sharp and desperate struggle. At the entrance of this little peninsula we halted, and our leader, assuming the air of one on whom rested a serious responsibility, urged on us the importance of discipline, and the necessity of attending strictly to orders in the coming conflict.

"My friends," said he, "we are about to engage with men whom we are driving to desperation. If that fire, as I believe it does, indicates the presence of the bush-rangers, you will observe that our approach will hem

them in, and that they will have no means of escape but by our destruction. Are you resolved and ready?"

"Resolved and ready!" said Beresford, who had recovered all his energy, although looking a little pale from the effects of his wound; "do you think we have come thus far to shrink back when the decisive moment is come? What would any one of us feel if he was in the hands of the bush-rangers, and saw his friends and neighbours sneaking off when it came to real blows, and afraid to go on with the enterprise they had begun? I, for one, am ready for the worst; I have been hit once, but I have no mind to duck my head for all that."

"We are all ready and resolved," we said; "do you lead us, and depend on it, you may trust us as if we were drilled soldiers."

"Then," said he, "let us lose no time, but endeavour to surprise them in their lurking-place. I think they don't suspect they are followed, or they would never have chosen a ground from which they have no retreat."

"Or, perhaps," said one, "they are confident in their strength."

"It may be so. At any rate it behoves us to use the utmost caution and address in our advance. And now let us move on."

We advanced accordingly, with that sort of tremulousness produced by excitement, not fear, which is apt to pervade those on the eve of a dangerous exploit. But our hope of surprise was soon shown to be in vain, for we had not proceeded more than two or three hundred yards, when a shot from behind a tree warned us that our approach was discovered. This did not stop our advance, however, and rapidly ascending a green knoll,

we beheld before us the party of bush-rangers in battle array. We levelled our pieces, but the voice of our leader arrested our impetuosity.

"Stop," said he; "that is not according to promise. You must not fire without the word."

"The bush-rangers will not wait for the word," said one of us, for at that moment they fired a volley at us. Again my poor young friend Beresford had the misfortune to be hit. He dropped to the ground. Quitting my party, I ran to him; he was bleeding fast. Several slugs had struck him on his right side; he was in great pain, and almost fainting from loss of blood, for the jagged shot made from split bullets had torn him sadly. Without losing a moment in asking questions, I contrived to drag him behind the dead trunk of a tree which was lying close to us. Our leader lost no time neither. In an instant he formed our little party in the position most advantageous to it, by moving us a little to the right.

Our enemies had not had time to load again; but they were busy about it, and as they stood in a position slanting from us, the six shots fired promptly, but coolly, confused them not a little; it stopped the loading of more than one musket, and before they could recover themselves, my party of seven put in a deliberate fire, for we were all used to the bush, and were not at all flurried. We now observed three of their men to drop; but two got up again, one remaining on the ground, apparently shot dead. In the meantime, Beresford's party were ready to fire again, and almost at the same time about a dozen shots came from the bush-rangers; not one struck us; but one ball struck the hollow trunk of the tree be-

hind which Beresford was lying, and was stopped by his body.

The bush-rangers were now ranged in a line opposite to us, and we counted thirty-one, three having fallen. Several of those, however, who were standing in line were disabled, for one or two were stamping and writhing with pain, and we saw one man with a fowling-piece in his left hand, and with his right arm hanging down, and seemingly rendered useless by a shot. There was one man among the bush-rangers whom we could not help noticing and admiring. He was one of the finest men I ever saw. Tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular, his whole form denoted great strength, combined with great activity. He stood a little in advance of his party, as cool as a cucumber, and quite regardless of the shots that flew about him. As the two parties were not above a hundred yards distant from each other, we occasionally heard his voice encouraging his men.

"Fire away, my hearties," he cried out, while he was reloading his musket with all diligence,—“fire away; better die by a musket ball than a rope.”

With that I saw him deliberately examine the pan of his piece. He was not quite satisfied with its appearance, for he paused for a moment, as if in search of something. Stooping down to the ground, he picked up a little twig or stiff straw, and coolly cleared the touch-hole of its obstruction. He then primed the pan quickly but without hurry from his powder-horn, and putting his musket to his shoulder, pointed it here and there among us, as if seeking for the best mark. He was not long in finding one. The magistrate who was on horseback, formed a conspicuous object. The other two on horseback were

behind us among some trees, to guard against a surprise from the natives. I saw the bush-ranger take a quick and steady aim, and immediately after, a cry from our leader made me fear that the shot had taken effect. It was certainly a capital shot; it went through his hat, and knocked it off.

“Everybody seems to have a spite against my hat,” said the magistrate; “the natives sent a spear through it the other day, and now these rascals have put a bullet through it. Any more of this fun will spoil my best hat. Keep up your fire,” said he to me and my party. “This bit of a scrimmage is no joke, gentlemen. Fire coolly, and take aim at a particular man. They are double our numbers, but we have the advantage of position. Who is that man in front? There he is, going to fire again;—he has fired, and one of you is down. This is a bad job,” said he to the wounded man, “but we can’t help it. But what do I see behind us? The natives! By George! they are on us! Look out for the spears! and keep steady, for God’s sake. Now we are fighting for our lives indeed. Keep steady, and fire quick. Keep it up—keep it up! Show a firm front, and I with the other two horses will make a rush at them.”

We heard the natives at our back uttering loud cries and screams, and inciting one another to close with us. I had enough to do to attend to my own work, for we were almost tired with loading and firing, and another shot from the bush-rangers tore open the left arm of one of our party.

The yells of the natives now became louder and fiercer, and the fire of the bush-rangers became quicker, and I thought I observed symptoms of an intention to

make a rush at us, simultaneously with the advance of the natives.

Spears now fell thick among us, and I thought a crisis had come which would settle the fight without any more long shots, when suddenly I saw our leader, with the two other horsemen, dash in among the natives, and slash away with their swords. They had served in the yeomanry in England, and understood the use of the broad-sword well, and every cut told on the naked bodies of the natives. The waddies were of no use against the broad-swords of horsemen, and their slight spears were not strong enough to serve as pikes, so that they were completely at the mercy of the sabres.

If it had been among trees, the horsemen would have stood no chance against such a body of natives; they would have been riddled like sieves by their spears, without being able to get a cut at them; but in the plain the horsemen had all the advantage, for the natives were afraid of the horses as much as of the riders, and finding themselves unexpectedly assailed in that fashion, they were for a little while panic-struck, and incapable of resistance. They soon found the use of their legs, however, and they scampered off like deer across the little plain towards the entrance of the peninsula. The horsemen followed them for some distance, and then returned towards us. In the meanwhile a brisk fire was kept up on both sides.

We had at this time seven of our men disabled, and about thirteen of the bush-rangers were in the same condition. But this increased the odds against us; for we were now only six, and with our three friends on horseback, nine against twenty-one. But we had the advan-

tage of position, and we had got rid of the natives; but the hazard seemed desperate.

I now observed the magistrate with his two companions to the left of the bush-rangers. They had sheathed their swords, and unslung the double-barrel fowling-pieces which they carried at their backs. All this did not take long in occurrence, though it requires many words to relate. They immediately fired at the bush-rangers and hit two of them. This move evidently puzzled the enemy; but their leader soon formed his party to meet it. Some of them faced about and fired, and one of the horses was hit, as I observed by its plunging about.

The fire of the horsemen, however, sensibly relieved us from the shots of the enemy, and our little party of six now redoubled their fire, and the bush-rangers began to waver and show signs of unsteadiness. It was plain that their weapons were not in the same state of efficiency as ours, for although they all had pieces of some description, their fire was slack and unfrequent, while every one of our barrels told; besides, we were all accustomed to the use of fire-arms, which most of the bush-rangers were not. I am inclined to think, too, that they were fearful of expending all their ammunition, which they would have a difficulty in replacing.

This and other reasons combining, caused them to slacken their fire. Their fire-arms, too, for want of proper cleaning, and from the damp of the bush, became every minute more and more unserviceable, and all the while we were pelting them with our shots, sheltered by the trees behind which we fought.

Once I thought they had fully made up their minds

to a rush, and the result might have been fatal to us. They gathered themselves up in a compact body, and the leader led them about fifty paces towards us at a running pace, but at this distance our volley told fearfully. We fired plump into the midst of them, at about fifty yards' distance, while the horsemen gave them the contents of three barrels on their left.

This was enough for them. Five fell—two got up again, and three remained on the ground. They now broke, and ran away over the little plain. Their leader was the last to run. He turned round, and levelling his musket, gave us a parting shot. This was the only shot that came close to me, to my knowledge, during this bloody fight. The ball struck the left-hand side of the tree behind which I was standing loading my piece; it knocked off the end of my ramrod, which in the act of ramming projected of course beyond the trunk of the tree. I thought it an odd shot, but I was too satisfied that it did not knock off me, to make any remark about it at that time.

I thought the horsemen would have pursued the bush-rangers as they were running off, but, contrary to my expectation, they galloped toward us.

"Keep where you are, gentlemen," said our leader. "Don't let the bush-rangers see how we are reduced in number. On the plain they would be more than a match for us, and they might turn and defeat us. We must be content with what we have done, and think ourselves well off. And now for our wounded friends: where is the surgeon?"

"He was one of the first of us that was hit; he is lying on the other side of the mimosa tree."

"That's unlucky; but we must do the best we can. Let us see—how many of us remain fit for service?"

Six of us stood forward.

"Here are six, and that with myself and my two companions on horseback, makes nine out of eighteen. A melancholy deficit. But with our small numbers it would be madness to force a close conflict with desperate men. We must take counsel what to do. In the mean time let us show a bold front. I did not expect, I must confess, that the bush-rangers would fight so well; but they are desperate, and they feel that their alternative is a halter."

We all thought that our situation, with the bush-rangers in superior numbers on one side, and with the natives on the other, was desperate indeed. We felt as doomed men; but unwilling to give up our lives without a struggle, and retreat being now as dangerous as to stand where we were—to say nothing of the impossibility of our forsaking our wounded companions—we determined to sell our lives as dearly as possible. We therefore drew ourselves up in three parties of two each, posted behind the trees.

In this position we stood for about half an hour without any signs of future attempts from the bush-rangers; they had ceased firing, and so had we; and presently afterwards they retired behind a green ridge about a hundred yards behind them, close to the water's edge.

During the fight, we had seen nothing of our friend whom the bush-rangers had taken with them from the Clyde, and to tell the truth, in the urgent necessity of defeating them and of defending our own lives, we had almost forgotten that his rescue was a principal reason

for our pursuit of the bush-rangers. The horsemen now did good service; they served as patrols to guard our little party from surprise to the right and left, and one of them made occasional excursions to the rear, to look after the natives, but it seemed they had had enough of it for the present.

Relieved from the apprehension of an immediate attack, we now turned our attention to the wounded. They had contrived to drag themselves behind the big hollow log of the tree where I had placed poor Beresford, and we were relieved to find them all still living.

The course of the conflict had drawn us more to the right, and in the excitement and the noise of the firing we had not been able to pay attention to those who were hit; it was as much as we could do to defend ourselves from being massacred by the numbers against us. It was an agreeable surprise to us, therefore, to find the surgeon, with a bloody handkerchief tied round his head, as busy as possible with his patients. During his sojourn in the colony, and indeed in the whole course of his life, he had never, he said, had such a favourable opportunity of gaining experience in gun-shot wounds.

I could not help thinking, notwithstanding our distress and peril, and the ghastly faces of the wounded, that the professional gratification at the sight of such a variety of lacerations, acted like a charm on his own wound. Planting the two horsemen, and two on foot as sentinels, we bent all our attention to the care of our suffering companions.

There was plenty of water at no great distance; we fetched some, and it refreshed them greatly. The surgeon was sadly troubled, however, at the prospect of

passing the night in the open air, for there were three of them in a bad way, and he feared the cold, frosty air of the lakes would be too sharp for the sick, and we had doubts about the prudence of lighting a fire. In this occupation the remainder of the day wore away, when I saw our four dogs coming to us.

I was startled at first, for really I had never missed them, the fighting and firing having put everything else out of my head. Hector came up to me with a meaning air, as I thought, and I looked at his chops, and saw that he had assisted in the killing of a kangaroo not long before; the other dogs looked significantly about something, but they kept in the rear of Hector, paying a sort of deference to his superior sagacity and favour. It struck me that a kangaroo steamer, if we could venture to make a fire to cook it, would be no bad thing in our present circumstances, and it was agreed that I should go after it, if it did not lead me too far.

"Take my horse," said the magistrate; "if you should fall in with the natives, he will save you from a spearing, and I'll stay to help the surgeon. He wants some splints, he says, for Worrall's arm, but there's no surgical instrument-maker with a shop hereabouts, I fancy."

"I have it," said the surgeon, "I have it; where's your axe?" said he to the other constable; "here Tucker, chop me a strip of bark from this tree. That's right; that's a capital piece. Here," said he, cutting some longitudinal slips in it, "here's a beautiful cradle for a wounded arm! This is another wrinkle for me! I never thought, when I was serving my time in Aberdeen, that I should have to invent splints from the bark

of a gum-tree in Van Diemen's Land! Now, my man, it's almost worth while to get one's arm shattered a bit to have it done up so nicely; that's it; don't wince, man; stop, give me a pocket-handkerchief, one of you, or something; there—that will make a nice soft bed for it. A little water do you want?"

"Couldn't you put a little brandy in it?"

"No—no brandy; inflammation, you know, and all that. And now for the others. Well, to be sure, I have enough to do with you all. Where have you been hurt," said he, "Mr. Nicholls?"

"Here, on the right side. I feel very faint."

"I see; but we must get out the ball; it isn't deep in. How to do it, though—that is the question—for I have not got the tools with me."

"I have got a corkscrew," said Worrall.

"A cork-screw! Why, I never did hear of balls being extracted by a cork-screw; but—"

Nicholls groaned.

Seeing that I could be of no use in this difficulty, and thinking that the meat would be a help to us, I slung my fowling-piece behind me, and throwing the horse's bridle over my arm, I set off in search of the kangaroo. I first did all that it was possible for me to do for my young friend Beresford. His left arm had been shattered by a ball, and he was suffering the most excruciating pain. The surgeon, who was much attached to him, but who, under the present circumstances, made no distinction, helping those first who most wanted assistance, now took Beresford's case in hand, and our mutual friend, the magistrate, gave him all the aid he could think of.

Chapter Sixteenth.

Hector points at unexpected game—Thornley meets with a party of Soldiers—His joy thereat—His disappointment thereon—His lamentable predicament—His fortunate escape from a pistol-bullet—His release—A letter from his Wife—The Bush-rangers escape to an Island in the Lake—Melancholy news from the Clyde—Thornley resolves to return home.

THE day was drawing to a close ; I judged there was a good hour and a half's daylight. I saw there was something in Hector's manner more than usual, but I set it down to the recent scrimmage with the natives, and the firing. I bid him "Go show !" He trotted on, and at about half a mile's distance he brought me to the dead kangaroo, lying not far from the lake. I did not wait to cut it up, but threw it as it was across the saddle, and was about to return to my friends, but Hector exhibited a strange unwillingness to go back, and ran on a little way in the direction from which we had come from the Clyde.

Being well acquainted with his ways, and knowing the wonderful instinct of the dog, I was uneasy ; my mind being full of the fear of natives being at hand. But the signs he gave were not the signs of natives ; they meant something else. The bush-rangers, I knew, were behind me, and that they could not pass our little party without an alarm being given. "Well," thought I, "the dog knows something that he seems to think I ought to know

too. I'll follow him a little way at any rate;" so I threw down the kangaroo from the horse, and mounted.

Hector seemed pleased at this; and knowing that I could keep up with him on horseback, he cantered off at a pretty good pace, keeping the track by which we had reached the lake. When we had gone about a mile, I stopped; but Hector still showed a great anxiety to proceed. "Well, Hector," said I, "I'll trust you, but I can't understand what you are at; if it is to go home that you're trying for, that won't do." The other three dogs had staid by the kangaroo, which I had thrown on the ground, so that I was alone with Hector.

We had proceeded in this way about three miles, and I was beginning to think I had gone far enough, when Hector suddenly stopped, and assumed the attitude of pointing at game. "What's in the wind now?" thought I. "Is it an emu that the dog has been bringing me to? It's worth a shot, however, for the sake of the fat; but I must be wary!" I got off my horse, which I tied to a tree, and advanced stealthily into the direction to which Hector pointed. I had not proceeded more than twenty steps, when to my surprise, and I must confess, exceeding fear, a quick sharp voice cried out—

"Who goes there?"

"More bush-rangers," thought I; "now I'm in for it!"

"Who goes there?" repeated the voice, and I heard the well known click of the cocking of a musket; it came from the direction of a thicket close by. I looked, and saw the muzzle of a musket projecting just beyond the leaves. I was in a terrible fright.

"A friend," said I in a hurry.

"Stand, friend; if you move, I fire!"

"I'm done!" thought I; "it's all over! I shall be made a target of by these rascals, and there's the lake handy by to throw me into afterwards!"

As these horrible thoughts crossed me, I heard the peculiar sound of the shouldering of arms together by drilled soldiers, and immediately afterwards a sergeant's party showed themselves in line to the left of the thicket.

"Hurrah!" said I, jumping about in delight; "well done, Hector!"

"Hurrah! What the devil is the man hurrahing about?" said the sergeant. "I've a notion, my friend, that the next caper you cut will be from a tight rope. Secure him! Present! There, you see, resistance is of no use. The rascal has got a beautiful fowling-piece with him, stolen, of course, from some unfortunate settler."

"What the devil are you about?" said I; "you're mistaken. . . ."

"No mistake at all. There, tie his arms behind his back—a little tighter. Two file, present at him. Now, my friend, lead us on to where your other blackguards are nestling, or by ——, you shall have a couple of the most beautiful balls through your rascally body that ever were cast by the king's commissioners. Lead on—I say! you won't! Fix your bayonets, and touch him up behind. Ah, that makes him move!"

"Holloa!" said I, "none of that fun; I'm not a bush-ranger; I'm after them myself. I'm a gentleman!"

The laugh that the soldiers set up at this assumption of dignity made the woods ring again.

"A gentleman! a beautiful gentleman you are, ar'n't you? It's a pity you hav'n't got a glass, to see how a gentleman looks when he has taken to bush-ranging!"

It struck me then for the first time, that my appearance might well lead the soldiers wrong as to the personal consideration which was due to my standing in the colony. I had on my bush-dress, which was dirtied and stained with travel, and my hands, face, and clothes were smeared with the blood of my wounded companions, whom I had recently been assisting. In addition to these unfavourable indications, my beard was of three days' growth, so that it may be easily imagined that I presented a capital likeness of a hunted bush-ranger to the eyes of the soldiers.

I might have laughed at my ludicrous position if it had not been so dangerous, for the two soldiers behind me, with cocked muskets and fixed bayonets, which seemed to have been sharpened up for my especial accommodation, kept their fingers, as I observed, and I shuddered at the sight, on their triggers, ready to treat me with the contents of their barrels at the least sign from their commander; and soldiers, I well knew, were not very particular about shooting a bush-ranger in the bush, and taken, as the lawyers say, *in flagrante delicto*. I was in a cold sweat, and my excessive perturbation was visible to the men.

"Look at the sneaking hound," said the sergeant; "what a desperate funk the coward is in just at the chance of being shot! Be steady, my men, don't shoot him if you can help it. Now, my beauty, use your stumps."

"I'll take you," said I, with a sort of desperate eagerness, "to where you will find the bush-rangers—and—"

"Oh—you will, will you? You're a nice fellow for

a bush-ranger! A pretty blackguard you—to betray your comrades!”

“I don’t betray any body,” said I. “I——”

“Hold your jaw,” said the sergeant, “and get on, or you shall have another spur from behind; and take care you don’t think of betraying us, or you’ll regret it as long as you live, though that wouldn’t be long, you may depend on it. And—hold your jaw,” again said he, seeing I wanted to speak—“lead us to your comrades in silence; we don’t want you to give ’em notice of our coming by your blackguard and treacherous tongue.”

Compelled thus to be silent, with my arms tied behind my back, if I had been inclined to philosophize, I might have mused on the instability of human affairs; but my contemplations were interrupted by the sight of my horse with his bridle hooked over the branch of a tree.

“O, ho!” cried out my tormentor, “bush-rangers ride a-horseback now-a-days, do they? The Clyde magistrate’s horse, by George! You infernal rascal! you’ve shot the magistrate, that’s clear; and here’s his gun that you stole. Don’t speak; we want none of your lies. Williams, lead the horse. Oh! the villain, to shoot a magistrate! A *bush-ranger* to shoot a MAGISTRATE!! That deserves double hanging! Now, don’t attempt to give us any of your jaw, or we’ll gag you in no time. Prick him up behind if he speaks. A murdering bush-ranger is not going to come over *us*, at any rate.”

“A pretty situation,” thought I, “for an old Surrey farmer, and middle-aged gentleman to be in! After I have escaped being shot by the bush-rangers, it seems that I am now more likely to be summarily executed by

a sergeant's party of soldiers! Well, this is the last time that I will ever go a-hunting of bush-rangers—that's certain."

All this I said to myself, for the terrible sergeant had his eye on me, and I feared that if I opened my lips I might have a couple of balls through my body, to say nothing of the points of the bayonets, the smart of whose application was uncommonly disagreeable.

In this trim we marched on. I looked round for Hector, but he had disappeared. After a three miles' march, we came to the dead kangaroo, which the dogs, for some reason, had abandoned.

"Here's their dinner," said the sergeant; "and a very pretty piece of venison it is. We are right on the track, I see; there it leads. We are not far from the rascals now, I'm thinking. What says our honest friend here? He nods his head. He's wise. (Here I rubbed myself against a tree at the place where I felt the smart of the bayonet.) Oh—I see, he knows how to take a hint. Now for the kangaroo. Johnson, you're a clever chap with your knife. Just divide him at the loins here."

"How shall we carry him?" said one.

"Put it on the horse, to be sure," said one of the soldiers.

"On the horse!" said the sergeant; "no, you would not dirty the magistrate's saddle that way. But—eh! it *is* dirty already, and with blood, too! That's the poor magistrate's blood! Oh, you murdering villains—won't you catch it for this? Here—stick the kangaroo on his shoulders, and let him carry it for us. Not a word! Let him feel the point of your bayonet, Steadman—that's

enough! Why, it makes him dance with the kangaroo on his shoulders. Now for it—move on, my men, and keep awake—there's mischief near, by this blackguard's looks, I'm thinking."

I was straining my eyes to endeavour to discover some sign of friendly help to release me from my very disagreeable situation, and it was my gaze that attracted the attention of the vigilant sub-officer. But it was now getting dark, and I could distinguish nothing but the dim and thick foliage of the cedar-trees, and the wide and cold looking expanse of the dreary lake. The sergeant took the lead on the track by which I, with my companions, in the morning, had followed the bush-rangers to their retreat, and we presently entered the neck of land at the extremity of which we had hemmed them in.

"A likely place for a nest of vipers to lurk in," said the talkative sergeant, in a low voice; "but what do I see there? Halt! Steadman, take two file, and examine that odd-looking lump there."

Steadman departed, and reported in military style,

"It's a dead native; he's been slashed all to pieces with broad-swords. He's quite warm, and seems only just dead."

"Broadwords! natives! oh, the cruel villains, they have been killing the natives to boil them down for their fat to make bush-candles! What a horrid set! But now, silence! no more talking; let no man speak a word. We can't be far off from the villains, for this neck of land doesn't stretch above a quarter of a mile into the lake; so now, my men, be awake, for we shall have a brush presently. Now, my friend with the kangaroo,

we will take the liberty to gag you; we can't have our precious lives put in jeopardy by your treachery. Open your mouth, you blackguard, or I'll wrench it open with the end of my firelock. There, now you're quite comfortable—so move on."

We moved on accordingly, leaving the horse tied to a tree in silence, and in Indian file, the wary old sergeant using every art to surprise without being surprised. It was nearly dark, so that we came on one of our horsemen, who was standing sentinel, without his perceiving us, so silent and cautious were our movements. At the sight of him, at not many yards' distance, we halted; but the sentinel's horse was aware of our approach before the less acute senses of his master had distinguished us. He snorted and betrayed our advance. The horseman immediately fired one of his pistols at us, and galloped off to give the alarm.

The hind-quarter of the kangaroo on my shoulder, being the most conspicuous object of the party, attracted the attention, I presume, of the horseman, for the pistol-shot struck one of the thigh bones of the animal, and the legs being tied tight to my person, the shock knocked me and my burthen down.

"There's a shot that has robbed the gallows," said the sergeant. "Don't be in a hurry, my men; take it coolly."

They had not advanced many paces, however, before they were confronted by the magistrate, with all our party who could act. I could just distinguish them as I lay on the ground, in an attitude of preparation for mutual attack. The steady discipline, however, of the military, and their habitual coolness in danger, saved both parties from a murderous discharge.

"We are a party of soldiers," said the sergeant, "and we are too strong for you. You had better surrender, and trust to the governor's mercy."

"Hurrah!" cried out the supposed bush-rangers.

"Hurrah!" said the cool old sergeant, almost inclined to be offended at this apparent insult to his dignity. "Hurrah! You're very fond of hurrahing, my fine fellows. The first thing that other chap that one of you has just shot said was hurrah! but I'm thinking——"

"It's all right," said a voice I was glad to hear; "we are friends!"

"The magistrate of the Clyde! Well, I'm glad you are safe, but I hoped you were bush-rangers. The Lord forgive me, I hope I have not made a mistake with the other man."

"What man? what do you mean?"

"Why, we got hold of a terribly ill-looking chap, I must say—one of the most ferocious-looking bush-rangers I ever set eyes on; and we were bringing him along with us, when your sentinel, I suppose he was, fired off his piece and shot him. But I hope there's no harm done."

"It's Thornley, I'll be bound," said the magistrate; "where is he?"

"Oh, he's not far off."

My friends immediately came to seek me in a body. It was some little time before they could pitch upon the spot where I lay, for being gagged I was not able to respond to their inquiries. At last, however, they found me, and as it was dark, in a seemingly desperate plight. Wet with the blood of the kangaroo, which was bound tight to me, and with my arms tied behind my back, and

gagged, the only signs of life that I gave was by low and hollow groans.

"He is almost gone, poor fellow," said my friends; "but let us release him from his bonds."

They untied my arms, and loosened the fastening of the kangaroo, and feeling about my face, they discovered that I was gagged. I was quickly relieved from this stopper; and the first thing, I remember, that I said was, "Take care of the kangaroo; it's the finest haunch I ever saw, and we shall want it for supper."

"Well," said the magistrate, "you can't be very bad after all, if you are wanting your supper. Come, tell us all about it."

I told them how I was mistaken for a bush-ranger, not forgetting the hint *à posteriori* which the soldiers had given me to hold my tongue, so that I had not the opportunity of explaining the mistake. I believe that I narrated this part of my mishap so ruefully, that it was impossible for them to resist the temptation to laugh at the mingled danger and drollery of my position, and then and there they set up such a burst of merriment as must have startled and astonished the bush-rangers if they were within hearing. Being now confident in our strength, by this addition to our numbers, of the party of military, we lighted a fire and cooked the kangaroo after the usual bush fashion.

"Thornley," the magistrate began to say.

"Thornley!" said the sergeant; "I've a letter for that gentleman. Sorry to be the bearer of ill news, sir, but your house and farm have been burned down. But this letter will tell you all. There is another for a gentleman of the name of Beresford—here it is. Oh, sorry

to see you've been hit, sir; but it's nothing when you are used to it. Here—let me hold this piece of lighted wood near you, that you may see to read it.”

Availing myself of the same light, I read, with an anguish which it would be in vain for me to endeavour to express, the following letter :

“DEAREST HUSBAND—The sad misfortune that has befallen us, and the fright and cold of the night, have so shaken me that I can scarcely write to you, and the soldiers cannot wait long for my letter, as they are in a hurry to go after the bush-rangers. Thank God! there are no lives lost, but the house is burned down to the ground, and almost everything that was in it. The large wheat stack, they tell me, is burning now. How the fire began, I do not know. Dick let the horses out of the stable, so that they were saved, but the saddles and all the harness are burned or spoiled.

“The cattle were got out of the stock-yard in time; but the home flock of merinos is dispersed in the bush. The wind was very high, and unfortunately the fire began at the further end, so that it embraced all the buildings except the new barn. The large pile of sawed stuff, and the stock of firewood helped to do the mischief, for they caught fire early, and communicated it to the house. As to trying to put out the fire with water from the pond, it was all useless. We longed for the London fire-engines. Poor Luey Moss was the first who gave the alarm; she was awakened by the blaze of the wood-stack, and very soon afterwards the house was in flames. The men did not like to go near it, as they were frightened at the little keg of gunpowder that was brought up about

a fortnight ago. We are all housed at the old stock-hut by the creek, and all our neighbours are very kind.

“It is now seven o’clock. A sergeant’s party of soldiers has been sent by the governor after these bush-rangers. They saw our fire in the night, and thought it was the bush-rangers who had attacked us. They were out lying on the Den Hill, about five miles from us, but they hurried to the spot, and gave us all the help they could, but help was useless against such a fire; however, it saved a few things for us. I am terribly uneasy about you, as we have heard nothing of you since you left to go in search of Mr. Moss, and I am glad, indeed, that the soldiers are going on your track. The sergeant seems a most determined fellow, but very grim-looking; you will be glad enough when you find yourself among them. They say that if they catch hold of a bush-ranger they will make short work of him, for the bush-rangers shot one of the soldiers at Pitt Water, and the others are very much enraged at it.

‘I hope to Heaven that you get safe out of this affair, and let the soldiers go on with it, for it is their business to go after bush-rangers. However, my hope is, that the soldiers may soon fall in with you, and then I do not doubt you will feel safe and comfortable. William wants to go with the soldiers to join you, but I have persuaded him to stay with us, as he is of more use here.

“The old sergeant says he *must* go now. Farewell, and Heaven protect you! Pray try to come back directly, as there will be plenty of people to fight with the bush-rangers without you, when the soldiers join your party.

“Your affectionate and anxious

“MARY THORNLEY.”

While I read this disastrous intelligence by the light of the cedar-stick which the sergeant held for the wounded Beresford's accommodation, preparations were promptly made by the magistrate for a night attack on the bush-rangers, in order to take them by surprise before they could be aware of the arrival of the soldiers.

What Beresford's letter contained I had no opportunity at that time of knowing, although I observed he read it over, short as it was, very earnestly two or three times, and then put it by very carefully. I was in a manner stupefied for a while by the intelligence of my wife's letter, and undetermined how to act. My first impulse was to hasten home immediately, but that was more easily said than done, for I was upwards of thirty miles from home, and the country was a desolate one to travel through, and difficult to cross. Besides, there was reason to believe that the natives were between our party and the settlements, and it was a risk of too great danger to encounter them single-handed. While I was hastily revolving these thoughts, the word was given for volunteers to step forward for the night attack.

"We don't want any volunteers for this business," said the sergeant; "you had better leave it to us, and stay where you are to take care of your wounded men. We are enough without you, and I warrant, if we come on the rascals, we'll give a good account of them."

"Ah! Mr. Sergeant," said the magistrate, "you want to have all the fun to yourselves. But I think you are right this time. I think, gentlemen, we had better stay where we are, and take care of our friends. I will go with the soldiers, because the presence of a magistrate may be useful; and do you, Worrall, come with me; you can act as a messenger, if you're wanted."

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They set out accordingly, and we remained by our fire, keeping strict watch, however, and full of anxiety for the issue of the adventure. We remained in suspense about a couple of hours, when Worrall returned and reported that they could see no signs of the bush-rangers. Presently afterwards the soldiers came back, and the sergeant posted some of them at intervals across the neck of land, so as to prevent the bush-rangers from stealing past us in the night.

"We need not be in a hurry," said the sergeant; "we have them safe, and when the daylight comes, we can catch them like rats in the corner."

"A pent rat is a dangerous animal," said Beresford.

In this position we waited till daylight; when, leaving the two horsemen to act as sentinels for the wounded party, we all proceeded to the point where we calculated the bush-rangers would be found. In this expectation, however we were disappointed; we could see no traces of them. Pursuing our search, we discovered footsteps at the water's edge, with the furrows made by the dragging of pieces of dead timber from the bank to the water. Some little bits of hide-rope were scattered here and there, as if recently cut.

"Depend upon it," said the experienced Worrall, "they have been watching us, and saw the arrival of the soldiers, and as a last shift they have made a raft of the dead timber, and floated away to the little island of snakes yonder. They could easily do it, for it is not above a quarter of a mile over. Anything to escape hanging!"

"And how are we to follow them?" said the sergeant; "why they would pick us off like cockatoos a-roosting

if we were to approach them that way ! But they must soon starve there for want of provisions. Well, we must keep a sharp lookout, and see what's to be done. If we had a boat now, we could venture it, though that would be a ticklish job."

"A boat !" said I ; "why I know there's a boat hid somewhere hereabouts, by a party who visited the lake last year. I remember they told me it was hid at the end of a neck of land like this, on the left-hand side of the lake."

"In that case," said the magistrate, "it is very likely to be found on that peninsula that you can see about three miles off there ; at any rate we can look for it. But, Thornley, you are wanting to get home, I dare say, and we can do without you now. Take my horse, if you like, and if you think it safe to venture, which I must tell you I doubt. But of course you must be anxious to get home."

"There is not much of a home left for me," said I ; "but I should like to get to my family as quickly as possible, and if I can trust your horse I will risk it, for I am not wanted here now."

"Oh, you may trust the horse ; he will take the water like a duck—only give him his head ;—and you may fire from his back like an arm-chair ; he will stand as steady as a rock."

"Well then," said I, "I'll go. So taking leave of my young friend, Beresford, and bidding good-by for the present to my companions, I left them to continue their pursuit of the bush-rangers, and set out on my way home. It would have been well for me had I remained ; but I little anticipated the disasters and perils which beset me

on this memorable journey through a difficult and desolate country. The account of the six days, however, during which I was lost in the bush, and the adventures that befell me, must form the subject of another chapter."

Chapter Seventeenth.

Thornley sets out for the Clyde ; tries to make a short cut, and misses his way—He is lost in the Bush.

It was at the close of the month of May, the beginning of the winter season in Van Diemen's Land, that I quitted my companions on the borders of the Great Lake, and, full of sad and anxious thoughts, turned my course towards home. I took care before starting to examine my double-barrel fowling-piece minutely, as well as the holster pistols at the saddle ; with these four barrels and my broad-sword, I considered myself a match for any casual attack, as my object was to make the best of my way home, and to avoid any encounter, either with bush-rangers or natives. Besides, as the distance from the Clyde was not much more than thirty miles, and my horse was good, I calculated, that although part of the country was hilly and difficult, and that I had lost some hours of the morning light before I set out, I could reach home before the end of the night.

Hector, who had watched me very closely all the morning, and had seemed particularly inquisitive as to what I was about, of course accompanied me, and I'lly accompanied him. In this fashion I travelled on, nothing doubting that my journey, dull and solitary as it was, would come to its natural termination after the usual fatigue ; but I little guessed what was in store for me.

I had gone about three or four miles, when I came to

the foot of a sharp hill, part of an irregular tier of hills, stretching from the lake to the south-east. When I had come down this descent with my companions, in pursuit of the bush-rangers, I had not particularly remarked its steepness, but as I stood at its base, and in a manner under it, I felt a strong desire to avoid the task of climbing up the height, and I cast my eyes about to see if there was any break in the tier that presented the prospect of a less difficult ascent.

I observed to the right a hollow which promised an easier passage, and as I had always strongly in my mind, that it was no farther to go round a hill, than to go over it, I turned my horse's head, without a hesitation, in that direction. When I reached the hollow, however, it proved delusive, and I found myself in a sort of bay surrounded by hills, not very high, but very steep. Still, full of the desire to avoid climbing a hill at the beginning of a journey, and having a sort of lazy disinclination to dismount, I continued my way somewhat farther to the right, expecting to find the outlet that I wanted.

In this way I was led to try several tempting valleys, which all ended like the first, in disappointment. Vexed at the loss of distance and the loss of time which these attempts cost me, I determined to be baffled no longer, and dismounting at the foot of a high hill, I proceeded to climb to the top, leading my horse by the bridle. When I reached the summit, I flattered myself that I was rewarded for my labour by the discovery of a valley which stretched to some distance, and by which, it seemed, I should be able to escape the fatigue of the continual ascents and descents which I should have had

to surmount by pursuing the original track to the left. I never doubted but I should be able to find my way to the Clyde by some way or other, for the thought of being lost in the bush, and on horseback too, never occurred to me.

I cantered pleasantly down this valley, which, with occasional windings, and one or two gentle ascents, continued for five or six miles, when I was suddenly brought to a stand-still by finding myself in the same difficulty as before, the valley ending in a little deep bay surrounded by steep hills. "Well," thought I, "as I have come so far, I am not going to be stopped by a hill now, though it is a tough one, and at any rate I have had an easy five miles through the valley."

So without stopping to think more on it, I got off my horse, and leading him by the end of the bridle, I scrambled up the hills. It was a very sharp climb, and when I got to the top, the prospect was rather discouraging. A succession of hills was before me, like the waves of a troubled sea suddenly solidified. The hills looked like gigantic waves. "Hills or plains," thought I, "I must get through you; I can't miss the 'lie' of the country; and so long as I pursue the right direction, I must come to the end of my journey at last." So I worked my way on, sometimes riding, sometimes walking, but imbedding myself more and more among the intricacies of the hills.

At last I got tired of this work, and my horse began to be tired too, so at the bottom of one of these punch-bowls I sat down to rest myself; Hector and Fly lay down beside me, and my poor horse, with his head hanging down, looked very doleful. By this time the day

had become overcast with a sort of mist, so that I could not see the sun, and the valley in which I was resting looked very gloomy indeed. "I don't like this," said I; "but I must have another try at it."

I took off my horse's saddle, and gave him a rub down, and cooled his back a bit; then I set myself to consider the direction of the Clyde. I was puzzled; and I began to feel that uneasy sensation which besets one who has lost his way. But my head was cool; and after calculating as well as I could the turnings and windings by which I had reached the present spot, I decided on making my way right across the tier to my left. Patting my horse, and speaking to Hector and Fly encouragingly, I set at the hill boldly.

I found this climb more difficult than any of the previous ascents; and when I had finished it, fagged as I was, it quite chilled me when I found that I was no better off than before; nothing but hills upon hills, as far as the misty atmosphere would allow the eye to penetrate. This was very vexatious, and I began to feel a strange trouble come over me. But I never was one to stand still and despond; so plucking up heart, I plunged down the hill, and found myself in a valley similar to the last, but with the disagreeable accompaniment of a multitude of stones and pieces of rock impeding the path.

"Worse and worse," said I; "but rocks or no rocks, I must get home."

I skirted this impassable way to the right for about a mile, till I came to a point which presented a favourable opening. I still kept, or thought I kept, the right direction; I followed it, therefore, leading my horse, and

getting over the occasional rocky parts as well as I could. I had now another hill to cross, but free, to my great joy, from stones. I got on my horse, for I was sadly tired, vexation of mind increasing the fatigue of body.

I had not proceeded many steps when I found one of the horse's legs failing him, and presently, setting his foot on the sharp top of a projecting stone, his leg bent under him, and he stumbled, and almost fell down. I was off in a moment, and with his foot in my hand. The mischief was plain; he had cast a shoe! I remember to this day the odd pang that shot through me as I contemplated this disaster. My difficulty was great enough with the aid of a horse, but without it, it was an awkward one indeed. Nay; it was worse than being without one, for I now had to lead a lame horse up hill and down hill, to my great fatigue and encumbrance. I held his foot in my hand for some time, I do believe for more than a minute or two, gazing at it, as if by looking and looking I could remedy the loss.

When I put down his leg, I stood for some time with my hand on his shoulder, and in a manner stupefied by the disaster. He was dead lame. I tried to lead him on, but it was with great difficulty that I could pull him after me. It then struck me that I might find his shoe by searching for it, and that by some means I should be able to put it on again, so as to answer as a temporary shift. Leaving the poor horse standing still, with his near foreleg bent listlessly, I tried to track the way by which we had come; but this I found no easy matter, and it consumed a great deal of time. I succeeded, however, in finding the shoe, which had been torn off among the rocks over which we had recently passed.

The recovery of the shoe quite lightened my heart, and I strode back to the horse with some glee, with my treasure. It was in vain, however, that I tried every imaginable scheme to replace the shoe. I tried to bind it on with my handkerchief, but that was an idle attempt. So there I was with a lame horse in a dead fix.

In the meantime the shades of evening began to close in upon me, and I felt weary and hungry. Having no fear of the horse's straying suddenly, I took off his saddle and bridle, and fastened the holster pistols round my waist with my handkerchief. He presently began to feed, and that pleased me. But what was I to do? To drag him after me in his lame state was an impossible task, and I could not at once make up my mind to leave him. "At any rate," I thought, "I will try the chance of a night's rest; that may restore him sufficiently, perhaps, to take me home."

So I set about establishing myself for the night, and as I was used to bush expeditions, I soon made myself tolerably comfortable. There was the kangaroo rug for my bed and covering, and the saddle for a pillow, and that was luxurious accommodation for the bush. I wished to go after a kangaroo, but I was too tired, and it was getting too dark for that sport.

I looked for water, and fortunately found a little spring running over a shelving rock at no great distance. I took a good drink of it, and then tried to get the horse to it, but it would have been too long a job; so I filled my hat, and by that means contrived to give him a drink too. I then kindled a fire, by flashing some loose powder in the pan of one of the pistols, and lighted a piece of charred punk, which is as good for the pur-

pose as the German tinder which has been brought to the colony by some settlers. Sitting down by my fire, I proceeded to eat my supper in great state, the kangaroo rug forming a comfortable carpet, and the saddle a resting-place for my elbow.

The fire burned briskly and cheerfully, and I discussed a huge piece of damper with considerable relish. As I did not expect to be out in the bush another night, I was rather lavish with my provision, and Hector and Fly came in for a more than liberal share of the supper. I confess I felt as if I wanted something more, and I was vexed to lose a night, and to have to pass it in the bush unnecessarily; but there was no help for it, so I prepared myself for a sleep.

With my pistols in my belt, and my fowling-piece alongside of me, I rolled myself up in the kangaroo rug, my feet towards the fire, and my head resting on the saddle for a pillow. Hector nestled himself close to my head, and feeling secure against any sudden surprise with my faithful dog watching me, overpowered with fatigue I soon fell asleep.

I slept for some hours, and was awakened by the cold air of the early morning. The sharpest time of the twenty-four hours in Van Diemen's Land is just before sunrise, and as it was now the beginning of winter, I felt the frosty air very disagreeable. It was still dark, and the fire was quite out. Not liking to stumble about in the dark after fire-wood, and expecting that the morning would break in about an hour or so, I unrolled myself from my rug, and kept myself warm by walking, taking short seaman's turns backwards and forwards.

The time seemed very long before daylight came, but

as the longest night must at last come to an end, so did this, and my sight was gladdened by the coming light, but the morning was very foggy. From this foggy state of the atmosphere I was inclined to suspect that I was in the vicinity of some lake, but how I could have wandered back to the Great Lake, if I had done so, it puzzled me to make out. The hazy state of the weather, however, was a serious evil, as it prevented me from seeing the sun, and deprived me of that guide to my course.

When it was light enough, I looked eagerly round for the horse, and saw him close to the spot where I had left him the previous night. I went up to him and examined him; he was in a pitiable condition indeed; his foot was swelled frightfully, and it was plain that it was quite out of the question to hope that he could carry me, for he could not even carry himself beyond a few steps on his three tottering legs.

Well, this was a bad job; but I had my own legs to carry me, and they had never failed me yet; it would take more time for me to get home, certainly, but I had not the slightest apprehension of being able to reach it. So, as there was no help for it, I was obliged to abandon the poor horse to his fate; his saddle and bridle I placed under a shelving rock, and I marked the place in my mind by taking various bearings, so that I might know it again.

Having done this, and having patted the horse as a sort of farewell—the creature seemed to look beseechingly at me not to leave him—I set about considering the direction in which I should proceed. I felt rather sharp-set, the damper having become digested with pro-

voking rapidity, but as I had nothing to eat, I was obliged to do (I used to say to my boys) as the King of Prussia did when he had no bread—I went without

I decided on the direction at once, my mind being still clear, and I tramped on lustily up hill and down dale for about ten miles, when I found myself becoming tired, and still embosomed, to my great perplexity, in the midst of these eternal hills. At last I got angry at my situation—my head became confused—I grew distrustful of myself and of my judgment, and I felt myself rapidly losing all sense and power of deciding on any direction as the right one.

My head, however, did not yet give way; I had still sufficient self-possession to be aware of the danger of suffering my mind to lapse into the perilous state of fear and indecision in the bush, and I thought if I could get some food, the restoration of the body's strength might help to keep the mind in its equilibrium. I looked out, therefore, for something to shoot; but in that desolate place I could not spy a single bird of any description.

I thought I would try what the dogs could do. I looked narrowly about for some distance around, but could see no trace of a kangaroo. I thought I would try, however,—so summoning up my spirits, and assuming a cheerful tone, I bid the dogs “go hunt!” To my great and most pleasurable surprise, they immediately began to hunt in circles around me, till the wideness of their range withdrew them from my sight. I flattered myself, by their not returning, that they had got scent, and I remained very anxiously at the spot where they had left me for more than two hours.

During this time, a fear came over me that the dogs

might leave me, and that I should lose the help of their watchfulness and instinct in the bush; but this fear was an injustice to their fidelity, for at the end of the time they returned looking sorely jaded, but with the marks on their mouths of having killed their game.

My two hours' rest had refreshed me, and it was with a joyful and eager voice, partly prompted by an exceedingly sharp appetite, and partly by the instinctive delight of a huntsman at success, that I bid them "go show!" They trotted on, and I after them, and a weary way they led me. Right over the steepest hills and down the sharpest precipices, without once stopping or swerving from their line, they took me over seven or eight miles of the severest country that I ever travelled over before or since. Several times I thought I should have been obliged to give in, but hunger is a fierce prompter, and I knew there was killed game at the end, and at length I reached it.

Even the dogs were tired; I sat down for a while, for I was dead beat, and I felt faintish. The sight of the kangaroo, however, was a restorative. I soon cut him up, and gave the dogs a meal; and then I kindled a fire, and was not very particular about the cookery, I assure you. I cut off slices from the loin, the tenderest part of the animal and the bush-ranger's tid-bit, and throwing them on the glowing embers, ate my vension stakes hot and hot without waiting for salt or seasoning.

I left off, because I could not eat any more, and then I began to think, What was I to do? I had now got into a part, still among steep hills, where I had lost absolutely all idea of which way I had come, or which way I ought to go. I was besides very tired, and my feet and limbs

were getting tender from scrambling over stony ground, and over rocks and precipices.

I felt too much fatigued to encounter more wandering that day, for the evening was coming on ;—so I made the best of it. I missed my kangaroo rug and saddle for blanket and pillow, but I lighted up a good fire, and sometimes lying down, and sometimes walking about to prevent the night air from benumbing me, and occasionally having a peg at the kangaroo, making capital broils, I contrived to get through the night without losing my spirits.

When daylight came I cut off from the kangaroo as much flesh as I could carry, and then looking out for the highest hill in my vicinity, I ascended it, and endeavoured to make out where I was, and which was my proper course. I could see nothing but hills, like the vast and tumultuous waves of a troubled sea. The atmosphere was still misty, and I could not, therefore, help myself by observing the position of the sun. I tried to put the instinct of the dogs into exercise, and I spoke angrily to Hector, and bid him “go HOME.”

The dog crouched, and obeyed reluctantly ; when he had got fifty yards or so I called him back, and then taking the bearings of different points I pursued the line which Hector had taken, hoping it was in the direction towards home, or to some inhabited place to which the instinct of the animal had prompted him. Cherishing this hope, I proceeded in this course for many miles, but over a dreadfully fatiguing country, but still without extricating myself from my embarrassing entanglement in those perplexing and confusing hills.

It was now beyond mid-day, and I sat down to rest

myself, and, kindling a fire, dined heartily on the flesh of the kangaroo which I carried with me, taking care to feed the dogs well, that hunger might not tempt them to stray from me. Having so refreshed myself, I earnestly bent all my faculties to discover whereabouts I could be, and which was the proper course to pursue. In my difficulty and anxiety, I thought the best thing to do was to try to discover my own track, which I hoped the tread of the horse's feet would leave sufficiently plain, and so find my way back to the point from which I had first deviated, when I sought for an easier passage across the tier, on leaving the Great Lake.

This I knew would be a tedious journey, but it seemed my only resource. I set about it, therefore, with all the coolness and vigilance which I could summon up, and choosing a direction which I judged would lead me across my own track, I set diligently to work. But all my efforts were in vain. Each succeeding mile seemed only to plunge me deeper and deeper into the recesses and mysteries of the woods.

At the close of day, when the light began to fail me, I found myself at the foot of a rocky and scraggy mountain, at the base of which was a black and stagnant-looking pool. An eagle arose from the margin of the water as I approached, and slowly soared to the summit of the mountain. There were no trees near this spot, nothing but a few ragged and stunted bushes. It was the very picture of loneliness and desolation. Its gloomy and fearful aspect struck a chill into my very soul, and the coming darkness helped to fill my now weakened mind with all sorts of superstitious fears.

I held my fowling-piece in my hand for a considerable

time, with a vague sort of apprehension of danger from I knew not what. At last I roused myself up sufficiently to light a fire, which was a difficult matter, so scanty was the fuel in that barren place. I contrived to kindle one, however; but its faint light seemed to multiply my terrors, and to aggravate the feeling of loneliness and desolation around me.

I felt that I was rapidly falling into that state of mind of which I had heard, but which I had never experienced—the confusion of intellect, and the deprivation of the power of judging, causing the peculiar aberration of mind which seizes on those who feel the terrible conviction of being “lost in the bush!” I was now lost in the bush! That calamity, however, frightful as it was—with my body enfeebled, and my mind wandering—was not the worst evil that was to befall me. But I must pause here, and recover myself before I attempt to describe the horrible fate that awaited me in the desolate wild of the dismal bush.

Chapter Eighteenth.

Is threatened by Eagles—His sufferings—The Magnetic Needle—
The Dogs give notice of the Natives—Their attack—His fight
single-handed with the Savages.

I SHALL never forget my sufferings on that wretched night. It was piercingly cold, as the nights usually are in the month of June in Van Diemen's Land, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could contrive, by incessant motion, to prevent my limbs from becoming benumbed.

The thoughts of my family, of my ruined farm, and of the disasters which seemed to thicken on me, with the dreadful feeling of my present state of helplessness, almost maddened me. At last, towards morning, I sat down by the fire, and from mere exhaustion fell asleep.

I was soon awakened by the nipping cold of the early morning. My sleep, however, short as it was, served to calm me. I began coolly to reflect on my position. "I certainly was lost in the bush; but was there no way out of the difficulty? If I continued in a straight line in any one direction, I must at last come to some stream, or perhaps to some stock-hut, or to some known point, which would be the means of recovering my way;—the great danger to be avoided was straying to the west, in which direction there were neither settlements nor stock-yard stations, and nothing but the wild and untrodden bush between me and the sea. If I could keep an east-

ward course, I must at last arrive at some broad track, and certainly at the high road across the island."

Such were my thoughts. I tried, therefore, to observe the rising sun, but the fogginess of the morning was too great to allow me to do more than ascertain the point from which light seemed to come. That was some help, however; so, summoning up my strength, and endeavouring to preserve the coolness of mind necessary to enable me to keep a straight course, I set out.

But I had not proceeded many miles before the same doubt, and confusion, and indecision of mind, which I had experienced the day before, again seized on me. When I perceived this fit coming on, I immediately paused and lighted a fire. While I was lighting it, a kangaroo hopped into sight; the dogs pulled it down in less than a couple of minutes, not a hundred yards from the fire. This I looked on as a good omen, and it reassured me. I made a good bush meal, and felt my strength somewhat restored.

It was now past mid-day, and I again set myself earnestly to consider the right direction. There was a barren hill to my right, very steep, and without trees to obstruct the view. I determined to climb up it, in order to get a better prospect of the country around, and with that view I looked about for a stick to use as a walking staff. I soon found a young sapling fit for my purpose, and having provided myself with this help, I buckled my gun behind me, that my hands might be at liberty. I then climbed, with a good deal of scrambling, to the top of the hill.

Having gained the top, I proceeded to examine the country around me very carefully, hoping that I might

catch sight of some point, or high hill, or particular tree, by which I might learn my present position.

I was anxiously engaged in this manner, and quite absorbed by my anxious survey, when suddenly there was an obscuring of the light above my head. I raised up my eyes to ascertain the cause of it, when, to my exceeding terror, I beheld one of the largest of the eagles of those regions poising itself on its wings not twenty yards above my head, and in the attitude of pouncing down on me.

I had more than once witnessed the attack of an eagle on a sheep, which is by fixing its claws on the body of the animal, and digging out its eyes with its beak; the sheep then becomes an easy prey. The thought of this horrible fate made me instantly put my hands over my eyes, so imminent was the danger, and so great was my fright. I fancied I heard the flapping of the creature's wings, and in a sort of despair I whirled the stick which I held in my hand over my head to ward off the expected attack.

Looking up at the same moment, I perceived a second eagle who had joined the first, and they now flew in rapid circles just above me. I guessed at once that I had approached the spot where they were accustomed to build their nest, and that they were angry at the intrusion. I slipped my fowling-piece from my back, and fired both barrels, first at one and then at the other. They uttered a fierce scream, but did not leave me.

I did not wait any longer, but ran helter-skelter down the hill, making more than one summerset before I got to the bottom. Luckily, however, my gun escaped any damage in this scrambling tumble; and although I felt a

good deal bruised, I lost no time in reloading it, and then I felt secure. The peril to which I had been exposed shook me a great deal, and I sat down at the foot of the hill in a very disconsolate mood, feeling that my nerve was giving away under the terrors of being lost in the bush, for at any other time I fancy I should have been glad of the opportunity of getting such a good shot at an eagle, and particularly of getting a sight of their haunts.

This thought made me very sad; but I still kept up my spirits, and my bodily strength was not yet subdued. I was well armed, and had my faithful dogs with me, and another effort might bring me to some known track. Again, therefore, I braced myself up to the task, and choosing a direction which, according to my judgment, led eastward, I determined to make a vigorous effort. My efforts, however, were all in vain, and the fourth night found me still an almost hopeless wanderer.

The fifth day passed in the same wearisome endeavours. My strength now began to fail me; not so much, I think, from bodily fatigue, as from the exhausting operation of anxiety of mind and uncertainty of direction. Towards the close of the evening I arrived, at dusk, at the foot of a rocky hill. The dogs were uneasy, and whined a good deal, but I set it down to their sympathising with my own appearance of sorrow and dejection.

I had scarcely strength to raise a fire and broil some of the flesh of the kangaroo which I carried with me. I had no water, and in the dark I could not discover any. A sort of numbness of the mind had now come over me; a leaden feeling of cold despair. In my strange frenzy, I fancied I must have wandered towards the western coast,

for I could not otherwise account for my not being able to discover some track or point known to me.

In this state I lay down by the side of the fire in a state of complete bodily and mental exhaustion. My dogs crouched close to me, and I fell asleep. I awoke once in the night with a feeling of cold; I replenished the fire with some large fuel, and slept again.

I must have slept soundly; for in spite of the cold, and of the thirst which was on me, I did not wake till the light roused me. It was a glorious morning; very cold, but the air was clear and bright. I tried to get up, but found my limbs so benumbed that I could hardly move. I contrived, as I lay on the ground, to push with my feet the loose pieces of dead timber about to the fire, which was still faintly burning. Presently there was a good blaze, and the warmth restored me a little. I continued to heap dead wood on till I made a complete bonfire.

This exertion and the heat of the blaze revived me completely, and once more I endeavoured to rouse myself to the labour of fresh exploring in the bush. This was the morning of the sixth day.

Casting my eyes about me, I saw, not far off, a sort of natural basin hollowed out in a rock, about a foot deep, and as clear as crystal. Feverish with thirst, I took a good drink, but the water was very cold. I then sat down beside it to consider what I should do.

In my tumble down the hill I had torn off the strap of one of my leather gaiters, and its looseness was an annoyance to me in walking. As I always carried a housewife with me in my bush expeditions, I thought I would spend a few minutes in sewing on the strap again; so I

undid the case, and placed it by the side of the rocky basin. I took out a needle, and with my arms resting on the side of the basin, proceeded to thread it, when it slipped through my fingers and fell into the water beneath; but instead of sinking, it floated on the top.

I was struck with this circumstance, and admired how the needle floated at the top of the water, when I observed it slowly to turn half-way round, and then remain stationary. It instantly occurred to me that the needle had become magnetized, and I remembered that, some weeks ago, my youngest daughter had been amusing herself with a magnet and the needles in this case. I tried it again; taking the needle from the water, I rubbed it dry and clean, and then holding it parallel to the surface of the water, I let it drop; it floated, and turned itself slowly to the same point as before.

I was full of joy at this discovery, as I now had the means of ascertaining the points of the compass, and my confidence in myself returned. Without losing any time, I prepared for another start. I breakfasted gaily on some of the kangaroo steak that remained, and talking to my dogs, proceeded on my way. I had not gone far, however, when I perceived by the dogs' significant signs that there was something in the wind. It was not a kangaroo, *that* was certain; but I flattered myself that we were approaching some human habitation, and that the sagacity of the hound had detected its vicinity. I spoke to him, therefore, and encouraged him to look about him, but the dog exhibited a strange reluctance to leave me, and presently began to whine in the manner which I knew indicated his scent of the natives.

Broken down as I was with excessive fatigue and

anxiety, I confess that this apprehension almost overpowered me; a tremulous fear possessed me; my limbs for a while refused to move; my sight became clouded, and a cold sweat came over me. This was my sixth day of wandering and privation in the bush, and where I was, or how far from home, was unknown to me. I sat down on the log of a tree, and tried to rally my fleeting spirits. I thought of my wife, of my children—of my home, or rather the spot where my home once was—and made a powerful effort to recover my coolness of mind, and to summon up my courage. “After all, it might not be the natives; the dog might be mistaken, or they might have passed away.”

I tried to delude myself with these hopes, but a glance at the dog was sufficient to convince me that the natives were near. Hector was very uneasy; he whined, and licked my face, and exhibited signs of fear too expressive to be mistaken.

With this horrible conviction on my mind that a deadly struggle for life must soon take place, the very extremity of my danger, and the force of my fear caused a reaction in my frame. I nerved myself up with a sort of terrible despair. I looked around, but as yet saw no signs of my dreaded enemies.

I examined the two barrels of my fowling-piece, and assured myself that the charges in them and in my pistols were unshaken. I carefully inspected the pans, probed all the touch-holes, and felt that the flints were firmly fixed and clean, and dry at their edges. Then I looked at my powder-horn, and calculated how many charges it would supply to me. I had a little bag of bullets with me; these I placed loose in a convenient pocket.

All the while I was searching the bush with my eyes on every side. No signs of the natives! I began to indulge in the hope that after all it was a false alarm, and again I proceeded on my way, but slowly and warily. I had gone about two miles, when I came to a spot which I thought was familiar to me. Looking about, I recognised the place where I had stopped five nights before with my lame horse; the horse had disappeared—perhaps strayed away—but I saw on the ground my old broadsword which I had left there as an encumbrance to my walking.

Full of fears of the natives, I greeted this weapon as an old friend, and seized on it eagerly. I felt more secure with this additional means of defence, and drawing it from its sheath, which I cast on the ground, I carried the sword in my hand. I had scarcely resumed my journey, when Hector began to growl and whine in a way which put me on my guard.

As my object is to record all the emotions of my mind during this time of my being lost in the bush, and exposed to the new peril which I am describing, I must not forget to tell that the unexpected recovery of my broadsword produced a strange revolution in my mind and feelings. I recovered from the extreme depression of spirits which had weighed me down and deprived me of all hope and courage, and I now felt a full confidence that I was a match for the natives, and that I should be able to keep them at bay.

Perhaps the restoration of mind caused by the accidental discovery of the magnetic needle on the water, and the confidence of the right direction which that discovery produced, helped to restore my coolness and cou-

rage. However, without more philosophising on that point, I will proceed to describe my fight with the natives.

Fight or no fight, I thought that the best thing I could do was to make progress onwards to the east with all the speed that my strength would allow. I strode on, therefore, towards a gentle acclivity, beyond which there seemed to be some clear ground, as the light was strong beyond it.

I was in a valley about a quarter of a mile broad, clear of trees, with a rise on each side of me thickly wooded. I ascended the acclivity, and was cheered with the prospect of a more open country, and with a scenery which seemed not unknown to me.

Turning back to look at the ground which I had passed over, and to take the bearings for my straight progress, I thought I detected on my left hand through the trees, the glimmering of a faint light. I was quite cool, and fully prepared for a conflict, but as may be supposed, I had no desire to seek it. Knowing the importance, however, of not being taken unawares, I stood still for a few minutes; but I saw no more of the light.

This light, I have no doubt, was caused by the two pieces of lighted stick which the natives carry about with them to light their fire. They have discovered, by some accident, that two pieces of lighted stick, or charcoal, crossed and in contact, will keep alight; whereas a single piece would soon become extinguished. The settlers have borrowed this hint from the natives.

I had turned round to proceed on my way, when my steps were arrested by a spear which passed by me to the right, and stuck in the ground. "Oh, oh!" thought I,

“the fun is about to begin, is it? Well, I have four barrels for you, my beauties; two long shots and two close ones, besides my broadsword for a tussle.”

I am surprised, when I look back, at my extraordinary coolness; but it was so. I did not fire, for I did not like to lose a shot, but suspending my broadsword by its leather to my left wrist, I held my piece ready. I was in a tolerably favourable position, on the top of a low green hill, so that I could see all around me, and I kept a sharp look-out, I can assure you, for I did not know from which quarter the attack might come.

I again turned round and proceeded a few steps, when another spear came close to me. I did not care much for their spears so long as they were cast from a distance, as they do not inflict any dangerous damage unless they are within forty yards or so; but this second spear was an indication of a determination to attack me, and it showed that I was watched, and that the natives were ready to take me at a disadvantage.

How many there might be I had no means of knowing, but I took it for granted it was one of their wandering mobs, consisting of about twenty persons, men, women, and children. I gazed earnestly in the direction whence the spear had come, but I could see nothing; the trees were about eighty or a hundred yards distant from me.

While I was looking, a native showed himself, and running a little way towards the spot where I stood, cast a womera at me. I had never witnessed the casting of this curious native weapon in a hostile manner before, and having had that satisfaction, I certainly have no

curiosity to see it cast in that manner again. The womera would have struck me if I had not skipped aside in time, and as it was it was only by a hair's breadth that I avoided it.

Almost before I could take aim at the native, the womera, skimming through the air, returned to the spot from which the native had cast it. I was unwilling to fire without a positive necessity, and I refrained from drawing the trigger, though I still kept my piece in the position of taking aim.

The native picked up his womera, and without waiting cast it at me again. I saw it whirling towards me with great velocity, and in an instant afterwards I felt myself struck with considerable violence on my left leg, which, at the moment, I thought it had broken. The shock brought me on one knee to the ground. The native gave a cry of exultation, and I immediately fired at him. The discharge of my piece was a signal for a rush from the whole body; about a dozen of them suddenly shot out from among the trees, and with wild and terrific shouts, rushed towards me.

Supposing that I was defenceless after the discharge of my gun, they came on swiftly, boldly brandishing their waddies in the air, with the intent of shortly exercising them on my unfortunate skull. I did not lose my presence of mind, but remaining on one knee, I fired off my second barrel, and hit the foremost man.

The second discharge puzzled them, and they halted, not knowing what to make of a gun that could fire twice without being loaded. Seeing them hesitating, I drew one of my horse-pistols, and treated them with

another shot; this completed their dismay, and they all scampered off as fast as they came, behind the shelter of the trees.

I lost no time in reloading my three barrels, and stood on my guard again. Hector and Fly were of no use to me; they were afraid of the naked savages. After waiting in my posture of defence for some minutes, I thought I might venture to make a move away from them, as I had given them a taste of what I could do; but on attempting to walk, I found that the blow of the womera had been so severe, that it had almost deprived me of the use of my leg. I limped on, however, as well as I could, deeming any advance homewards a gain.

I picked up the womera and carried it away with me. It was in the shape of a half circle, with a peculiarity of make which must be seen to be understood, but of the efficiency of which I had received a sharp illustration.

The natives seeing me bear away the womera, which is a scarce weapon among them, and much prized, and observing by my limping that I was wounded, raised a loud cry of anger and triumph, which sounded in my ears very disagreeably, as it betokened an inclination on their part to continue a conflict which I should have been very glad to avoid, though still without fear as to the result, if I could hold out long enough.

Had I been aware that the fierce and vindictive Sydney Black, known by the name of Musqueeto, was among them, my confidence would have been considerably abated; but the worst was to come, and the fight presently began to assume a more serious air than I had calculated on.

The terrible extremity, however, which I have to tell of is of a nature so horrible and appalling, that I cannot summon up spirits to enter on it to day; my mind sickens and revolts at the recollection of its horrors. The description of that fearful trial must form the subject of a separate chapter of my eventful history.

Chapter Nineteenth.

Takes refuge in a deserted Hut—The Natives besiege him, and set fire to the Roof—His Escape—He climbs into a Tree—The Natives set fire to it—Death seems certain—His Rescue.

THE day was clear and bright, and though the early time of June is the beginning of winter in Van Diemen's Land, the beams of the sun, which shone splendidly at mid-day, had still power to spread a feeling of summer warmth over the park-like plains. I shall never forget that memorable day of my fight with the natives. Alone—buried in the wilderness of the vast woods—wearied by a six days' travel in the bush in which I had been lost—worn down from want of sleep, and feeble from scanty fare, I was now exposed to a deadly struggle with a body of furious natives, led on by the fierce and malignant Musqueeto. I am amazed, when I look back on the events of that fearful day, that I did not sink under its difficulties, and that I am still alive to relate the story. But to proceed.

I hastened on my way in the direction of the east, trusting that by such a course I should come upon some settlement, or stock-keeper's hut, which would afford me a place of defence, or at least on some track of man or beast on which I could rely to lead me to human habitations.

The natives ceased to molest me for some miles, nor could I detect any signs of their vicinity, but it will

be seen by the sequel that they did not lose sight of me. I was in some pain, and limped a good deal at first from the effects of the womera which had struck me on the leg, but as I got warm the pain left me, and I ceased for a time to feel much inconvenience from the wound.

In this manner I proceeded some miles, when my sight was gladdened by the appearance of a stock-keeper's hut, to which I eagerly hastened. I looked round when I approached it, but I saw no sign of the natives. When I got to the door I called out—

“Hulloa! anybody here?”

No answer.

“Is there any one inside? I have been lost in the bush, and the natives have been attacking me. Don't be afraid of me; I am William Thornley, of the Clyde.”

No reply

I then knocked loudly at the door, thinking that some one might be asleep inside, and not liking to burst in suddenly, lest I should be mistaken for a bush-ranger, and fired at; for the equivocal appearance which my person had presented a week since to the soldiers had not been improved, I felt aware, by a six days' scramble in the bush; but as no reply was made to my repeated knocking I concluded that the hut was empty.

I tried the latch, therefore, of the upper half of the door: it was not fastened; I opened it easily, and looked in, first taking a look behind me, for fear of a surprise. I saw no signs of an inhabitant; so I opened the lower half of the door, and stepped in. A view of the interior satisfied me at once that the hut had not been occupied for some time. I was sorry for this, as I had hoped that I should meet with some one to direct me on my way,

and who might assist me in my defence against the natives. But on the whole, I was pleased with the discovery of this hut, tenantless as it was, as it afforded me, I thought, a temporary place of refuge.

I examined its capabilities of defence, and found that it consisted, as usual, of two rooms or divisions, in the inner of which was a window, and a shutter at the back; there was another window and shutter in front by the side of the door; when I say a "window," I mean an opening to let in the light without glass or window-frame; when the door and shutters were shut, it was dark, with the exception of the light which penetrated through the crevices of the logs of which the hut was rudely built.

Without losing any time, I set to work to render the hut as secure as possible against the natives, should they have the mind to follow up their first attack. The upright logs seemed all to be pretty tight set, and strong enough to resist any ordinary violence. The window at the back was awkward, as it afforded the facility of a back entrance while I was engaged in front.

To render this point secure, I pulled down the partition of split logs that divided the two rooms, and contrived to barricade the back window with them, so as to ensure me from any sudden inbreak on that side. I then barricaded the front window in the same manner, and I put a split log against the lower part of the door, with one end jammed firmly in the earthen floor of the hut; the top part of the door I left to the security of the bolt, intending to open it occasionally for the convenience of firing through its opening.

These preparations occupied me for about an hour,

and, having concluded them, I felt that I was very hungry, and what was worse, that I was suffering from thirst. There was an iron tripod on the hearth, the usual piece of kitchen furniture in a stock-keeper's hut, and being heavy and bulky, it had not been removed. It occurred to me that the spot chosen to build a hut on was sure to be near to water.

As the extremity was pressing, I thought I might venture to get a drink, so I clambered over the lower part of the door, followed by Hector and Fly, who stuck close to me, to look for the spring. The dogs were panting for water, so I left them to their instinct, and presently Fly, after a little snuffing about, went straight to a pool formed by a spring, not twenty yards from the back of the house.

I first took a good drink, which refreshed me greatly, and then I cast about how to get a supply of water inside the hut. The tripod was too clumsy and too heavy to be taken to the pool, so I got over the half-door, and lifted it close to the entrance; then I went back to the pool, and, filling my hat with water, ran back with it, and poured it over the door into the tripod.

While I was repeating this operation, I was terribly startled by Hector suddenly darting off in the direction of the bush. I thought, to be sure, that the natives were on me, and, dropping my hat full of water, I scrambled over the door into the hut again. But it was a false alarm, for in a few seconds after Hector came to the door wagging his tail, with a kangaroo-rat in his mouth, which he had killed, and which was the cause of his run into the bush.

I was not a little rejoiced at this unexpected supply,

for I was sadly at a loss for food. I was not long in kindling a fire, and skinning my prize, which was rather a large one of the sort, nearly as big as a rabbit, and excellent eating, and made a broil of it, which afforded me a delicious repast.

My spirits revived after this refection, and I began to consider that I was perhaps only losing time by remaining in the hut. It was now, as nearly as I could judge, about two hours past mid-day, and I had plenty of daylight before me to make considerable progress before night. I had recourse to my needle again, and I dropped it into the tripod; it sunk to the bottom immediately, being affected by the iron; so I filled my hat with water, and removing it to a distance from the iron tripod, had the satisfaction of ascertaining the points of the compass.

I prepared, therefore, to leave the hut, and put myself in order accordingly. I was in the very act of throwing my leg over the half-door, when I was stopped in my exit by a growl from Hector, who immediately galloped towards a thicket of trees about a hundred yards or more in front of the hut. He quickly returned, and by his crouching attitude and peculiar whine I at once knew that he had scented the natives.

It was too true; in less than a minute afterwards, a body of about twenty men and women, headed by Musquetteo, moved rapidly towards the hut.

Being invigorated by food, refreshed with partial rest, and confident in the power of my fire-arms—appalling as this attack appears to me when I look back on it—I felt at the time no fear. I was confident in the security of my little fortress, and for a moment I felt a sort of re-

luctance to fire into the mob of naked natives—savage as they were—to the certain destruction of some of them ; but this disinclination lasted only for a moment, for the natives, with the grim Musqueeto, whom I now recognised at their head, were fast approaching, and the feeling of self-preservation regained its predominant influence.

My left-hand barrel contained a single ball ; I fired ; a native fell, but the others continued to advance, and sent a shower of spears at the open part of the door ; one of them went through the lower part of the back of my left hand, where it stuck, while some went past me into the hut, narrowly missing me, and some stuck in the wall on each side.

I fired off my second barrel loaded with shot, and slamming the door close, bolted it. This second discharge, I judge, checked their rush ; and fortunately, for so determined were they, that I feel convinced, on looking back, they would otherwise have succeeded in their intention of forcing open the door.

They now commenced a furious yelling round the hut, and some of them tried the back window, but they found it secure. In the meantime I reloaded my fowling-piece, putting a couple of balls in each barrel, for I felt that the natives were in earnest, and that it would require my utmost efforts to save my life from their furious assault. I was standing by the door uncertain what to do next, when suddenly a spear was thrust between the crevice of the lower and the upper door ; fortunately it encountered my shot-belt, which it perforated, and gave me time to jump back.

It seems that my movements were watched from the

outside through some crevice, for immediately on my retreat, a rush was made at the door ; had it been made on the upper part, the savages would have effected an entrance ; but the lower part, having been secured by a log, resisted the attempt, and placing the muzzle of my piece at the same crevice through which the spear had been thrust at me, I fired first one barrel and then the other at the assailants. A horrid yell, that made the woods re-echo, proclaimed that my fire was successful, and I could hear the tramping of their feet as they retreated to a distance.

There was now a pause for some time, and a dead silence. I reloaded my piece and stood on my guard. I was afraid of placing my eye close to a crevice, lest a spear should be thrust into it by some devil watching me. I remained in this state of suspense for some minutes, which seemed to me as many hours, wondering what was to come next. While I thus stood, my ears were assailed again with the horrid shouts and yells of the natives, whose rage seemed to have redoubled at the sight, probably, of their dead companions.

Fearing that the strength of the upper part of the door was not sufficient to stand against a rush, I lifted up a heavy log that had formed one of the door-posts of the partition which I had broken down, and placing one end of it against the door-flap I added my own weight to it, pushing it down the door as firmly as I could.

But this sort of precaution was unnecessary. The devils had hit on a surer and safer means of accomplishing my destruction. I was soon made sensible of their operations by a smell of smoke, which, to my terrible dismay, became rapidly stronger and stronger. They

had set fire to the thatch of the hut. The smoke increased, and presently the light of the flame was visible. I now perceived that the thatch had been set on fire on all sides, and as the smoke and flames increased, the rejoicing natives yelled and screamed with frantic delight.

My presence of mind almost forsook me at this crisis. Escape seemed impossible; and I felt that I was doomed to the most horrible of deaths—that of being burnt alive!

The light of the flames increased, and the smoke inside the hut became almost insufferable. Feeling that if I remained where I was death was certain, I determined to make a desperate effort to escape. There was a little wind, which blew the smoke in the direction of the back of the hut; the natives, as I knew by their cries, were assembled in the front.

I determined to attempt my escape by the back window, hoping that the smoke in that direction would serve to conceal my exit at the moment of getting out of the window, when my position would be defenceless. I hastily tore down my barricade of logs, and jumped through the opening into the smoke. I was almost suffocated, but with my gun in my hand I dashed through it.

For the moment I was not perceived; but the natives soon got sight of me, and a volley of spears around me, one of which struck me in the back, but dropped out again, proclaimed that they were in chase. I kept on running as long as I could towards a tree that was in the middle of the little plain over which I was passing, intending to make that my fighting-place, by setting my back to it, and so to protect myself in the rear.

The spears flew around me and near me, but I reached the tree, and instantly turning round I fired among the advancing natives. This checked them, for they were now becoming afraid of my formidable weapon, and seeing that I stood resolute and prepared for them, they retreated to some distance; but they continued to throw some spears, most of which fell short, and kept up a shouting and yelling in a frightful manner, capering and dancing about in a sort of frenzy—ferocious to get at me, but kept at bay by my terrible gun.

My blood was now up. I was excited to a pitch of joyful exultation by my escape from the burning hut, and I felt that courage of excitement which almost prompted me to rush on my enemies, and to bring the matter to an issue by a bodily conflict with my broadsword. But prudence prevailed; and I placed my hope and my dependence on my trusty gun, which had already done me such good service.

Taking advantage of the temporary inaction of the natives, I felt for my powder-horn to re-load the barrel which I had discharged. To my unspeakable horror and disappointment, it was missing. I searched every pocket in vain. I had laid it on the table in the hut, and there I had left it. To recover it was impossible, as the hut was all in flames, and while I gazed on the burning mass, a dull report, and a burst of sparks from the building, made known to me that the powder had become ignited, and was lost to me for ever.

In my agony of mind at this discovery, my hair seemed to bristle up; and the sweat ran down my forehead and obscured my sight. I now felt that nothing but a miracle could save me; but the love of life increasing in

proportion to the danger of losing it, I once more summoned up my failing energies for a last effort. I had three barrels loaded; one in my fowling-piece and two in my pistols; I had also my broadsword, but that would not avail me against their spears.

If I could hold out till night, I thought I might be able then to elude my savage enemies, as the natives have a fear of moving about at night, believing that in the darkness an evil spirit roams about, seeking to do them mischief, and who then has power over them. Casting my eyes upwards to the branches of the tree under which I was standing, I observed that it was easy to climb, and there appeared to me indications of a hollow in the trunk between the principal branches, which might serve me for a place of shelter till the night should enable me, under the cover of its darkness, to escape from my pursuers.

I formed my plan on the instant, and without losing a moment I slung my gun behind me, and catching hold of a branch within reach, I clambered up. The natives, who were watching my motions, renewed their shouts and yells at this manœuvre, and rushed towards the tree in a body.

I scrambled as fast as I could to the fork of the tree, and found, to my infinite relief, that my anticipation was right; there was a hollow large enough to admit my whole body, and effectually to shield me from the spears of the savages. As my foot reached the bottom, it encountered some soft body which I quickly learned was an opossum, the owner of the habitation, which asserted its rights by a sharp attack on the calf of my leg with teeth and claws: I was not in a humour to argue the matter

with my new assailant, so with my thick bush shoes I trampled the creature down into a jelly, though it left its remembrances on my torn flesh, which smarted not a little. When I recovered my breath, I listened to ascertain the motions of my enemies outside.

They had ceased their yells, and there was a dead silence, so that I could hear my own quick breathing within the trunk of the tree. "What are they about?" thought I. While I mentally ejaculated this thought, I felt an agitation of the tree, from which I guessed that some venturous savage was climbing up to attack me in my retreat. I cautiously raised myself up to look around me, but the appearance of my hat above the hole was the signal for half a dozen spears, three of which passed through it, one of them grazing the scalp of my head. "That plan will not do," thought I; "I must keep close."

As I crouched myself down, I thought I heard a breathing above me; I looked up and beheld the hideous visage of one of the savages glaring on me with his white eyeballs, which exhibited a ferocious sort of exultation. He had a waddy in his hand, which he slowly raised to give me a pat on the head, thinking that he had me quite safe, like an opossum in its hole. "You're mistaken, my beauty," thought I; "I'm not done for yet." Drawing one of my pistols from my pocket, which was rather a matter of difficulty in my confined position, I fired. — The ball crashed through his face and skull, and I heard his dead body fall heavily to the ground.

A yell of fear and rage arose from his black companions. I took advantage of the opportunity, and raised myself up so as to look about me, but their threatening

spears soon drove me back to my retreat. There was now another pause and a dead silence; and I flattered myself with the hope that the savages, having been so frequently baffled, and having suffered so much in their attacks, would now retire. But the death and the wounds of their comrades, it appears, only whetted their rage and stimulated them to fresh endeavours; and the cunning devices of that devilish savage, Musqueeto, were turned in a new and more fatal direction.

As I lay in my retreat, I heard a sound as if heavy materials were being dragged towards the tree. I ventured to peep out, and beheld the savages busy in piling dead wood round the trunk, with the intention, as I immediately surmised, of setting fire to it, and of burning me in my hole.

My conjectures were presently verified. I saw emerging from the wood one of their females, bearing the lighted fire-sticks which the natives always carry with them in their journeys. I looked on these agreeable preparations as a neglected but not indifferent spectator, the natives disregarding my appearance above the opening, and waiting with a sort of savage patience for the sure destruction which they were preparing for me.

The native woman approached with the fire, and the natives forming a circle round the tree, performed a dance of death as a prelude to my sacrifice. I was tempted to fire on them; but I did not like to part with my last two shots, except in an extremity even greater than this.

In the meantime the natives continued their dance, seeming to enjoy the interval between me and death, like the epicure who delays his attack on the deli-

cious feast before him, that he may the longer enjoy the exciting pleasure of anticipation. Presently, however, their death-song broke out into loud cries of fury; they applied the fire to the faggots, and as the blaze increased, they danced and yelled round the tree in a complete delirium of rage and exultation.

The fire burned up!—the smoke ascended! I already felt the horrid sensation of being stifled by the thick atmosphere of smoke before the flames encompassed me. In this extremity I determined at least to inflict some vengeance on my savage persecutors.

I scrambled up from my hiding-place, and crawled as far as I could on one of the branches, which was most free from the suffocating smoke and heat, and fired the remaining barrel of my fowling-piece at the yelling wretches, which I then hurled at their heads. I did the same with my remaining pistol, when, to my amazement, I heard the reports of other guns; but whether they were the echoes of my own, or that my failing senses deceived me, I knew not, for the smoke and flame now mastered me. Stifled and scorched, I remember only falling from the branch of the tree, which was not high, to the ground, when my senses left me.

I was roused from my trance of death by copious deluges of water, and I heard a voice, which was familiar to me, exclaiming,—

“Well, if this is not enough to disgust a man with this horrid country, I don’t know what he would have more. For years and years have I been preaching to him that nothing good could come of this wretched den of bush-rangers and natives, and now you see the evil is come at last.”

I opened my eyes at these words. It was the voice of Crab, whom Heaven had directed with a party of friends to this spot to deliver me. Overcome with the intensity of my emotions, racked with pain, and sick with the very fulness of joy at my escape from death, I uttered a piercing and agonizing cry of mingled pain and delight, and fainted.

Chapter Twentieth.

He recovers his senses and finds himself among Friends—Account of the Bush-rangers at the Great Lake—Moss's extraordinary escape.

It was some time before I recovered from this fainting fit, as the surgeon called it, "of physical exhaustion and mental emotion." When consciousness returned, I heard around me the subdued hum of human voices, and for a moment I thought that I was in the power of the natives, and that I was under preparation for being roasted at the fire of the blazing tree from which I had fallen, scorched and stifled. I kept my eyes closed for a short space; presently I distinguished the voice of the magistrate of the Clyde.

"He seems in a bad way, poor fellow! Have the devils touched any vital part with their spears?"

"No," said another voice, which seemed to me that of my old friend, the surgeon; "he has not received any mortal hurt that I can see, but he has had a sharp rap on his left leg from some blunt instrument that has cut and bruised it at the same time; but there's no bone broken."

"He'll never come to any more," said some one, which seemed strangely to me like Crab's voice, but I could not imagine how it could be his: "never; that's my opinion! Why, he has been lost in the bush for a week,

without anything to eat, I'll be bound, and without a drop of water, for there's never a drop to be had in this country when you want it—in summer, especially. No, poor gentleman! I've stood by him for many a year, trying to persuade him all I could to leave this horrid place. I always told him that something would happen at last; but I never thought it would be so bad as this. He used to say, poor fellow, while he was alive, that I was always roasting him; he little thought he would be roasted in real earnest! And there's that new sample of Cape wheat that he was to try this season: all lost! What *could* induce him to get up that tree, I can't conceive."

"The tumble from the tree can't have done him any good," said the magistrate.

"No; but the branch was not high, and it was a nice soft bed of turf for him to fall on; it was good luck that he was not hit by our shots when we banged at the natives."

"He is a long time coming to."

"No, he's all right. This is more exhaustion than anything else. His pulse is coming back now. You see, he has been in the bush for six days, suffering under the sensation of being lost, and that wearing of the mind is enough to exhaust the strongest energies. But he's coming to fast now."

"Will you bleed him?"

"Oh, no! A glass of brandy would do him more good than bleeding, in his present state."

"Here's a flask of brandy."

At the suggestion of bleeding me I opened my eyes, not wishing to give the worthy surgeon the trouble of performing that operation.

"By George!" said Worrall, the constable; "do you see how he opened his eyes, and roused up, when he heard the talk about the brandy? I do think that a glass all round would do us good!"

"Well, my boy," said the magistrate, "how do you find yourself after your tumble?"

"How do you find yourself, master?" said the rough and honest voice of Crab; "how do you find yourself, now you're come to life again? I always told you how it would be; but you never would believe me; and there's the farm burnt down, and all the home-flock of merinos the Lord knows where; and there's Miss Betsy taken ill, and Missus is but poorly, and they are in a pretty confusion with one thing and another; and the blood-foal's dead, and the tame herd has taken to the bush, and I don't know what else to say to revive you, except that they say the small-pox is about, and ruination is going on everywhere; and—"

"Hold your tongue, you villanous old grumbler," said the magistrate; "you have croaked enough to make a sound man sick. Let him alone."

My head was still confused, and I was perplexed to account for what I heard and saw around me. My thoughts reverted to the day when we had our skirmish with the bush-rangers at the lake, and for a few moments it seemed to me that I was awaking from a long sleep, and had been suffering under the influence of a hideous dream. But the sight of the blazing tree quickly recalled to my memory the late terrible scenes; a feeling of sickness came over me, and I closed my eyes again.

"Give me your brandy-flask," said the surgeon; "here, Thornley, take a little sip."

He put the bottle to my lips, and I drank a few teaspoonsful.

"Is brandy a good thing for faintness, doctor?" said Worrall.

"Nothing better; it's a capital medicine when you know how to use it."

"I feel very faint, myself," said Worrall; "poor Mr. Thornley's condition has quite overcome me. Could you oblige me with the brandy-flask? I know how to use it."

"From long practice, I dare say."

"Go and mind your business, Worrall," said the magistrate. "You shall have brandy enough when you get home, for you have behaved well, and deserve it, but now let us be moving;—that is if the doctor thinks our friend can travel."

"See if you can find a spring hereabouts, Worrall," said the doctor, "and we will give our friend a refresher."

A pannikin of water was presently brought to me, into which the excellent doctor put a fair proportion of brandy.

"We must get him home somehow," said he, "and set him to rights when we get there. We can't treat him as if he was comfortable in a nice sick-bed."

I took the drink with eagerness, and looking up, beheld the face of our lost neighbour, Moss.

"How did you get away from the bush-rangers?" were the first words that I uttered.

"Oh!" said Moss; "we'll tell you all about that by-and-by; I have to thank my friends here for my recovery, and you among the rest, not forgetting our young friend Beresford; but that story will keep; we'll tell you all about it in good time."

I now saw that Beresford was near, but a little behind me, with his left arm in a sling. I reached out my hand to him, and, handing his gun to Mr. Moss, he extended his right arm to me, and raised me up.

"That's right," said Worrall, who now came up to us; "never say die. We are all ready," he said to the magistrate, touching his hat, "and we can get home before morning; the night will be fine, and we have daylight enough to cross the Big River, and then it will not be more than twenty miles or so to the Shannon."

"I am ready," said I; "but"—and I tried to move a few steps—"I can't walk! I feel as stiff as if I actually had been roasted at the fire yonder."

"Well," said the surgeon, "I'm inclined to think you would not have taken long to roast at that same fire, if we had not come up in time to stop the cooking of you; but there's a horse for you, and we must contrive to carry you with us."

"What has become of the natives?" said I.

"There are some of them lying dead not far from us," said the magistrate; "the rest did not stay to make a fight of it with our number. They are off in the bush somewhere. But as to following them there, you might as well look for a needle in a stack of hay. Besides, we have had enough of it, and I think the natives, for this once, have had enough of it too. But we must not waste time in talking; we have the Big River to cross before dark, so let us make a start."

I was helped on to a horse, and we proceeded as fast as we could to the banks of the Big River. We reached it before dark, but we could not find a ford. We consumed the remaining daylight in searching for one with-

out success ; and it was resolved at last that we should bivouac on its banks, and resume our search at daylight. We lighted up several fires, and by the aid of some loose branches, and the bark of trees, by means of which was made a breakwind, I shortly began to feel tolerably comfortable, to which some kangaroo steaks and brandy-and-water not a little contributed. As we lay by the fire, I was curious to learn some account of the bush-rangers, who had escaped, when I left my companions, to a small island in the lake, at no great distance from the main land.

“ Will it do him any harm,” said the magistrate, “ to keep him awake with the story ? ”

“ Oh ! no,” said the surgeon ; “ it’s early yet. Go on, and then you will sooner have done.”

“ Do you describe it, Moss,” said the magistrate ; “ you saw it best, and you can praise us, and so relieve our modesty from the painful necessity of praising ourselves.”

“ Very well,” said Mr. Moss ; “ as I was only a spectator of the fight, perhaps I can best describe it.”

“ How did Crab come among you ? ” said I.

“ Oh ! that’s easily told,” said Crab. “ After the soldiers left us, Missus’s mind misgave her that they would never find you, and I entirely agreed with her on that point ; so seeing what a taking she was in, I offered to go for you and bring you back, that is, if the natives left any of you, for I told Missus they were terrible, voracious cannibals. It seems, however, that the soldiers did find you, or rather that you found them, and by all accounts you had no reason to be over-pleased with their treatment of you.”

"Say nothing about it," said I, rubbing myself behind; "there was a mistake."

"Was there? And is it true that they touched you up, and made you dance? Lord! how they did laugh when they told me of it! they said"—

"Say nothing more about it; I don't want to be reminded about that."

"Well, a corporal's party came up from camp next morning to stay at the Clyde as a post of observation, so I left Missus quite safe and comfortable, *only* that everything she had was burned, and the whole family was in distress and confusion; and I promised her, if you were killed by the bush-rangers, which I told her I had no doubt you was, for it's always best to know the worst, that I would bring home your dead body for her to bury, which would be a great consolation to her, poor lady, I dare say. So I and Bob set out on your tracks, and we reached the lake the very morning you left it for the Clyde. And how it was that we missed you I can't understand, except that nobody can ever find his way in this wild country when he's once lost."

"I see," said I, "I thought to take a short cut to the right, and so I missed you."

"That's always the case," said Crab, "in this miserable place; nothing did ever go right in it, nor ever will. But I'm getting old now—the more fool I for stopping in it so long. But it won't be long before I'm out of it; this last business has been a sickener."

"You're one of Job's comforters, Crab," said I; "but now pray don't interrupt Mr. Moss in his story."

THE CAPTURE OF THE BUSH-RANGERS.

When the fight in which you were engaged, (said Mr. Moss,) was ended, the bush-rangers retired behind the green bank by the margin of the lake. They lay close all night, but they sent out scouts to see what you were about, and when one of them came back to warn them of the arrival of the soldiers, they were in a great fright, not knowing what to do. Some of them proposed to make a dash through your party, but that was thought too rash; one or two who were wounded hinted the prudence of surrender, but the Gypsy, as they called him, who acted as their leader, threatened to blow out any man's brains who proposed a surrender.

"Better be shot," he said, "like men, than be hanged like dogs."

Two of the bush-rangers had been seafaring men, and they proposed that we should swim over to the little island that was not more than some few hundred yards from the shore.

"And what's to become of our arms and of the wounded?" said the Gypsy.

"Oh!" said they, "make a little raft, and put our arms and clothes on the top of it, and then swim and push it over; there's no tide, and the lake is as smooth as glass."

"A capital plan," said the Gypsy; "we'll do it,—and then we can defy the murdering villains that are after us; for if they attempt to get at us, we shall have all the advantage of firing at them under cover."

The bush-rangers were not long in putting this scheme in execution. All the time you were watched by two

scouts, and they saw you sitting by your fire and enjoying yourselves ; but it was not their game to excite your attention. The rogues worked hard, and by launching some dry logs into the lake, which they lashed together with bullock-hide, they soon made a sufficient raft for that purpose.

“ Now,” said the Gypsey, “ are you all ready ? But I forgot—can you all swim ?”

Three of them, who had been mechanics of some sort, declared they could not swim a stroke.

“ Here’s a mess ! Well, I tell you what you must do, my fine fellows ; you must hold on in the water by the raft—that will keep you from sinking. But what shall we do with our prisoner ?”

“ Oh, let him go—he’ll only be in the way ?”

“ No, no, we’ll keep him, we may find a use for him yet. Now, sir, can you swim ?”

“ No,” said I—for the thought struck me of a strata-gem to escape—“ and I hope you will not expose me to the risk of being drowned.”

“ Oh, you must take your chance ; it’s no worse to be drowned than to be hanged ; so strip, Mister, and bundle into the water.”

I took off my clothes, and the scouts having been withdrawn, and the whole party collected, we advanced towards the water.

“ Stop,” said one of the sailors ; “ how much line can we make by putting it all together ?”

By a general contribution of neckcloths, garters, cords, and bullock-hide, they made a line of about a hundred and fifty yards in length.

“ What’s this for ?” said the Gypsey.

"You'll see the use of it presently," said the sailor.
 "Now for it;" and we all got into the water.

"Where's the prisoner?" said the Gypsy.

"Alongside me," said the other sailor; "he's all safe."

In this manner the swimmers slowly and with great difficulty pushed forward the raft, those who could not swim, and I, pretending not to be able to swim, holding on. They had reached the middle of the passage, or a little more, when the sailor to the right said to the one by me,

"Mate, take the end of the line and swim to the shore, I think it will reach it now, and then haul on gently, and that will quicken our work and lighten it too, for it's getting more than we can do. Be alive, for this is too hard work to last long."

My near companion quitted me with much alacrity, glad to be relieved from his share of the toil of propelling the clumsy wood-work, and shortly afterward I felt that the raft was being hauled in from the shore.

The attention of the bush-rangers around being distracted from me by this circumstance, I took advantage of the opportunity, and quietly dropped under water, for I had been taught to swim, as a necessary part of my education, in early youth; and I was as confident in the water, so long as my strength lasted, as on dry land.

On this occasion I had need of all my skill. My limbs were torpid and benumbed from inaction in the water, and by the exposure of my hands and arms to the cold night air. I may add, that all the bush-rangers complained of the piercing coldness of the lake-water, and there was a terrible chattering of teeth among the holders-on before I left them.

Well—I dropped quietly under water, taking care to keep my head, as I thought, towards the shore of the main land; and although my limbs were almost paralysed by the cold, I contrived by a vigorous effort to strike out for nearly half a minute under water, there's no knowing what a man can do till his life is at stake—and when I came to the surface, I had the satisfaction to find that I was at a fair distance from the raft.

I swam on lustily, but in my hurry, and, I suppose, anxiety and confusion of mind, instead of swimming towards the main land, I swam towards another island, which in the darkness I mistook for it. This island was nearly a mile from the spot that I quitted, and being deceived as to its distance, I expected to reach it without much effort, and I nearly exhausted myself by quick swimming before I was much more than half-way over.

Fortunately, there was not a breath of air stirring, and the water was quite smooth, but bitterly cold. I rested in the water for some seconds, but the cold was so piercing that I was afraid of cramp; so I struck out again and worked hard. I reached the shore of the island at last. but I was so completely exhausted that I could scarcely stand. The morning now began to break, and I perceived that I was about half a mile from a low point of land which ran out from the main shore into the lake.

I was too tired to venture into the water again, and I assure you that my situation was a very awkward one, indeed. I kept running up and down for some time to keep myself warm, and at last I thought I might as well be drowned as die of cold where I was, so I plunged into the water again, and made an effort to reach the opposite shore.

I had got little more than half-way across, when my strength failed me, and I began to sink slowly into the water. I gave myself up for lost, and I began to utter that which I considered my last prayer, when I felt my foot strike against the ground; the water reached to my chin, and I was just saved. I cautiously waded on, fearing to fall into some hole every moment; but the water grew shallower and shallower, and the sand beneath my feet was firm and even, and I arrived at the dry land.

Without losing a moment, I set off to the point where I expected to find my friends; I met them on their way to the concealed boat. They were much astonished, as you may suppose, at the sight of a creature that evidently was not a kangaroo, but that was similarly unencumbered by any article of dress. But matters were soon explained, and they had a fine laugh at the joke, when I told them how I had escaped. There was a friendly subscription of articles of apparel, to which the slain bush-rangers were made to contribute more efficiently.

“Well—and did you find the boat?”

We found the boat in pretty good condition, with a couple of sculls in her. We soon launched her, and then it was debated what should be our mode of attack. The old sergeant—what a grim old fellow he is!—proposed that we should attack them on three sides at once, and make two rafts to assist us.

“If we go all together in a huddle in this little boat,” said he, “they will fire at us in a heap, and we shall have no chance, at least not without great loss, and that we should endeavour to avoid; whereas, by firing from three points at once, we shall distract their attention, and those in the boat may dash in and charge them.

Of course, we soldiers will go in the boat; it will just hold us and no more."

"I don't like your lives to be risked even in this way," said the magistrate. "I think the safer plan will be to starve them out. We gain nothing by exposing our lives unnecessarily in a conflict with hardened felons and murderers: they can do no harm where they are, and they must be starved out at last. We can keep a strict watch on them by the aid of our boat, and my opinion is, some of them will get tired of being starved, and will betray the rest."

"Just as you please, sir," said the sergeant; "it's all one to us; but I should like to make a dash at 'em, the cowardly scoundrels, to murder a soldier in cold blood, and fire at his back! But if these rascals were to put another dodge on us, and steal off while we are looking on, there would be a fine laugh against us when we got back to Camp. We don't mind doing it alone, rather than not do it at all—what do you say, my men; shall we try the boat?"

"Ay, ay," said the men; "we can fire close, and they can never stand it; besides, we can fire three times to their one, as they have to load from their powder-horns, while we have our cartridges. Better have it over at once, and rap at them while we can."

"Well," said the magistrate, "I have my doubts; but it certainly is of importance to secure these desperate fellows, and it would not be pleasant to have the laugh against us if they escape; so let us set about it without losing time."

We all set to work, and we were busy constructing our raft, when Crab and your man appeared on horseback.

"Yes," said Crab, "we tracked you to the place where you had the first fight, and then we easily tracked you on to the boat. And such a set of mad fellows I never saw before in all the days of my life; one would have thought you were going to have a frolic instead of a deadly fight with desperate men; but this horrid country makes all the people mad, and mad they must have been to come to it, and madder to stop in it—that's my opinion!"

"Mr. Crab entertains peculiar views," said Moss, "and he has his own way of expressing himself: but to proceed with my story—that is, if I am not making it too long."

"Not a bit," said I; "we have nothing to do but to hear it; and, as I was at the beginning of the fray, I should like to hear the end of it."

"Well, then," said Moss, "we worked hard all that day, but we could not construct anything to our minds as a fighting raft. Half of the soldiers were despatched to keep watch on the part of the shore which we had quitted, and which was nearest to the island. We passed the night as usual, but we had plenty of fires to keep the cold off. Next day we finished our raft, which we launched into the water. It was then towed by the boat towards the island. When we approached within range, a musket-shot was fired from the shore, which we observed fell short of the boat in the water, but we saw no one on the beach."

"This will never do," said the magistrate; "we shall all be picked off this way."

He then called out to the sergeant to go back, which was done, and we returned to the land to the point from which

the bush-rangers had started the morning before. We all went on shore again, and consulted on what should be done. We were engaged in this deliberation, when we were agreeably surprised by the appearance of a corporal's party of soldiers, and presently afterwards by a bullock-cart drawn by four bullocks, and bearing another boat, which had been despatched from Hobart Town to the lake, as it was guessed such an assistance might be wanted. This boat was larger and stronger than the one we had found, and being thus provided, and our strength being reinforced by the addition of the corporal's party, it was at once resolved that we should force the bush-rangers in their retreat by a simultaneous attack on different points. The sergeant took the command of one boat, and the magistrate of the other.

Chapter Twenty-First.

The Governor's Proclamation—The Magistrate's Mission—The Sergeant's Device—The Bush-rangers Captured.

WE were just shoving off from the shore, when a messenger on horseback arrived from Hobart Town, bearing a letter from the Governor to the magistrate, which of course we stopped to read, as the despatch was marked "Important and immediate." The magistrate having read it over to himself, said that as its contents concerned us all, he would read it aloud, which he did to the following effect:—

"By —, Esq., Lieutenant-Governor of his Majesty's Settlements on Van Diemen's Land, &c. &c. &c.

"Whereas the convicts named in the margin, who have been sent to the new settlement of Macquarie Harbour, have effected their escape by passing the mountains, and are now at large; and whereas it has been represented to me by —, Esq., at whose house the said convicts, or several of them, were on the 9th instant, that they or several of them were desirous of surrendering themselves to the Government; I do hereby declare that all or any of the convicts named in the margin, together with such others as may have made their escape from Macquarie Harbour at the same time, shall be pardoned for all

offences committed by them, murder excepted, upon surrendering themselves, with their arms, to any of the under-named gentlemen, they being in the nomination for the magistracy of this island, or to any officer or non-commissioned officer commanding a party of the King's troops, provided that such surrender shall be made on or before the 21st instant.

"And I do hereby require and authorize ———, Esq., of the Clyde; ———, Esq., of Jericho; and ———, Esq., of the Clyde, they being in the nomination of the magistracy, to receive all or any of the said convicts on their voluntary surrender, to convey to them a pledge on my part that no charge shall be exhibited against them for any offence committed by them in this island, murder excepted, provided they shall surrender themselves, with their arms, on or before the 21st instant.

"And I do hereby declare, that in the event of the said convicts not accepting the mercy herein offered, and of their continuing in a state of resistance to the laws after the time specified, I will cause the whole of the King's troops, together with the armed inhabitants, to be put in motion against them, and that I will put a price upon each of their heads, authorizing all his Majesty's subjects to bring them in, dead or alive.

"And I do hereby further declare that I do by this paper, under my hand, and the seal of the colony, convey to you full power to pledge me to the several convicts for the performance of all herein expressed and declared on my part, and to receive their surrender.

"———, Lieutenant-Governor.

"Government-House, Hobart Town,

"To ———, Esq.,

"River Clyde."

"Now, my friends," said the worthy justice, "it is all very well to show your courage and your determination in making an attack on these bush-rangers, but we must not be too hasty in the matter. Bear in mind that our object should be to capture these dangerous men without necessarily exposing our own lives, or the lives of these brave soldiers who are so eager to get to close quarters with the murderers of their comrade. As the Government has empowered us to offer that their lives should be spared, with the exception of the actual murderers, on the condition of their surrendering themselves, it is my duty to make the clemency of the Government known to them, and to give them this chance of saving their lives."

There was some murmuring at this, and it was contended that no terms ought to be kept with villains who had committed outrages and atrocities so horrible as these had done; but the magistrate was firm in his sense of his duty, and declared that he was determined to give effect to the merciful intentions of the Government.

"But how are we to acquaint them with it?" said the sergeant; "they will be sure to fire on us if we approach them in a body, and I don't suppose that any one of us is inclined to go alone into their den of wolves!"

"I will not ask any one to do my duty for me," said the magistrate; "I shall take one of the constables with me to pull the boat, and go alone, and without arms; my mission will be a mission of peace and mercy, and I must take my chance of the rest. Come, Worrall," said he, "step into the boat and pull me over."

"I'm a bad hand at pulling," said Worrall, "and besides, they have a particular spite against me, and would skin me alive if they could get me; not that I mind, only I would rather anybody else did the job this time."

"You can pull a long face," said the sergeant, "at any rate; but one of us can go, if his honour pleases."

"No, no," said the magistrate; "Worrall is the proper man; it is right that he should attend me in his official capacity."

It was with the most ludicrous reluctance that Worrall proceeded to exercise his official functions on this disagreeable occasion; and as his face was turned towards us as he sat in the boat with the sculls in his hand, the dolorous countenance of that usually facetious individual raised a general shout of laughter.

"I know," said Worrall, in most lugubrious accents, "I'm booked; I shall be riddled like a sieve. Ah! you may laugh, but how would you like it yourselves? And the bush-rangers always put jagged balls in their guns, out of spite; as if smooth ones would not do as well."

"Give me a stick—and tie something white—a handkerchief, or something, to it, that we may not run any useless risk. That will do—now shove us off—and—Worrall—what's the matter with the man? Give way! the sooner we are there, the sooner it will be over."

"Well," said Mr. Crab, "if you don't like to be shot yourself, you needn't disgust other people with it. What made you stay in this horrid country? It's your own fault for stopping in it, where there's nothing but wild bush-rangers and savage natives to murder and devour you—that's my opinion."

"Oh!" groaned Worrall, "it will be all over soon enough!"

The boat proceeded languidly on its way, feebly propelled by exceedingly slow strokes, the sculls, as we observed, rising perpendicularly into the air, and descend-

ing again in a straight line into the water, thereby causing the least possible motion to the boat which bore the wretched Worrall to his miserable doom, who ever and anon looked over his shoulder towards the anticipated spot of his expected sacrifice, ducking his head occasionally with a quick and frantic motion, to avoid the shots which his fears suggested were being aimed at him. The magistrate, who was standing up in the boat with the white flag in his hand, at last seized hold of Worrall's almost paralysed hands, and forcing him to row, by a few vigorous strokes the boat was soon forced into the mid-channel.

We now observed the bush-rangers assembling on the beach of the island in order of fighting, and with their arms in their hands. As the boat approached the shore, we saw the magistrate wave his white flag in one hand, while in the other he held up the open letter which he had received from the Governor. The boat now neared the shore and became stationary, but we could not hear what passed.

"I will supply that deficiency," said the magistrate. "I confess I did not feel very comfortable as we approached the spot where the bush-rangers were assembled, and when I felt that my life was in their power; but I lost no time in telling them of the merciful offer of the Governor. Worrall had laid himself down at the bottom of the boat, which I saw excited the bush-ranger's suspicions; I made him get up, therefore, and when they caught sight of his face, there was a general shout of anger, and more than one piece was levelled at him. I put up my hand and appealed to their honour, and said that I had trusted myself among them in order

to save life ; that I was bound to do my duty, and that I could not better evince my desire to save them from the consequences of their holding out, than by my present act in confiding to their good feelings. I am inclined to think that my eloquence would not have saved me from their murderous inclinations, if it had not been for their leader, who really is a fine fellow, and I should like to save him if I could. Some of the rascals called out 'Treachery !' and pointed their guns at me, but their leader (the Gypsy) stopped them, and he and I had a parley together. I should say that I observed evident signs in some of them of an inclination to submit themselves.

" 'Will all our lives be spared ?' said the Gypsy, 'if we surrender ?' 'Not all,' said I ; 'but all except those who actually committed the murders with which you are charged.' 'But we are all in for it,' said he, 'and we must stand or fall together ; we won't agree to have some picked out from the rest to be hanged in Camp yonder !' 'I cannot engage,' said I, 'that all your lives shall be spared ; but your immediate and quiet surrender would no doubt go far in your favour.' 'Let us hear that part of the Governor's letter read to us word for word,' said the Gypsy.

"I read it to them from beginning to end, but they shook their heads at it.

" 'It wont do,' said the Gypsy ; 'we may as well be shot as be hanged. But you see we are well armed, and prepared for you. We don't wish to do you any harm ; I believe you mean well to us ; but if you attack us, you must take the consequence. We will fight it out to the death. What say you my men, shall it be life or death

with us?" 'Ay, ay,' said the men; 'no surrender, no surrender.'

"I thought my position was getting ticklish, for the bush-rangers were working themselves up to a pitch of savage fury. I, therefore, thought of the best mode of retiring.

" 'I will give you,' said I, 'another hour to consider of the offer of the Governor; if before the end of that time you will consent to submit, hold up a bough by the water's edge, which we shall be able to see from the other side. I leave you now, hoping that you will consider the merciful offer of the Governor, and take advantage of this chance of saving your lives.' So saying, and without waiting for a reply, I immediately took the sculls and pulled back; and glad enough was I to escape so well, I can assure you. And now, Moss, do you tell the rest."

We waited till the expiration of the hour (said Moss), but we observed that the bush-rangers were very busy with the dead wood, and with boughs of trees, which they cut down and dragged to the shore, to form, as it seemed, a shelter, behind which they might defend themselves, and at the end of the time we saw one of them holding the bough of a tree in his hand, which he waved about.

"They have agreed to surrender," said the magistrate; "don't you see the signal which we agreed on?"

"Not a bit of it," said the old sergeant; "those fortifications have not been run up for nothing: the treacherous devils, they show that branch as a feint, depend upon it, to put us off our guard. But I think we may take advantage of their own stratagem, and by pretend-

ing to be deceived, we shall be able to deceive them. Now, sir," said he to the magistrate, "will you be ruled by me for this once? I'm an old peninsular campaigner, and have had some experience in the bush with the Yankees, and I am up to their manœuvres."

"With all my heart," said the magistrate; "what do you propose to do?"

"Why this is what I propose. First, do you get into the boat again with Worrall, as if you saw and understood their signal, and relied upon their meaning to surrender. When you are sure they have seen you do this, then come back, as if you had determined on some other plan of receiving their submission. Now look at the wind. You see it blows from us to them pretty smartish. Let all of us hoist white flags or boughs of trees; they will see us from the other side, and they will think we are sure of their surrendering quietly, and so being deceived, if they mean treachery, we shall be able to circumvent them. Now you see the wind, as I said, blows from us to them. We must make a large fire, as if for cooking, and to make it look as if we had abandoned all thoughts of fighting."

"How will that help us?" said the magistrate.

"Why, you see when we make a good fire, we can make at the same time a good smoke, and smoke enough to hide us from the view of the bush-rangers."

"And what will you do then?"

"Let one boat go straight forward, making all the noise you can, to fix their attention, while the other steals round to the side of the island. We soldiers will go in that, and take them in flank, and then we shall have them nicely; and while they are engaged with us, you

can push on and land, and so they will be between two fires."

"Good!" said the magistrate; "a capital scheme; that is, if you can make smoke enough."

"Oh, let me alone for that," said the sergeant; "I learnt that trick long ago in America; I'll warrant I'll make a smoke that a man can't see a pot of beer through it."

The sergeant's plan was immediately carried into execution. We collected a quantity of dead leaves, which at this season of the year are damp and difficult to inflame. We first made a fire as usual, and then we proceeded to light others along the shore, taking care to smother them with dead leaves, which raised plenty of smoke, which the wind carried over the water in the direction of the island. We then manned the boats, and pursuing the plan of the sergeant, made as much noise as possible in pulling over. In the meantime, under cover of the smoke, the second boat, with the sergeant and his party, made the best of its way to the side of the island. When we came within speaking distance, a voice hailed us:—

"What the devil do you kick up such a smoke for?"

"The wood by the side of the lake is damp, and will not burn. We saw your signal, and we are come to receive your surrender."

"Surrender be ——! More fools you to suppose we were going to give ourselves up to be hanged like sheep in a slaughter-house. Take that for your folly."

At these words a volley was fired at us, but we were prepared for it, and by falling down in the boat we escaped it altogether, the shots, in the obscurity of the smoke, going over our heads. Without returning the

fire, we immediately pulled off, and when we had got to a safe distance, we began to fire, to distract the attention of the bush-rangers from the second boat. We continued to fire for some minutes, till the smoke cleared away, and then we had the satisfaction to see that the boat with the soldiers had succeeded in getting round a point of land which concealed them from the sight of the bush-rangers.

"The murderous and treacherous rascals!" muttered Worrall, "they deserve to be punished for this villanous treachery. Lucky we were to escape from them, but I suppose the Gypsey thought he should secure our destruction best by this trick."

"Now," said the magistrate, "we may calculate the soldiers have landed. Let us pull inshore and be ready to second them. Fire as fast as you can till we get close in, and then let half reserve their fire. There are the soldiers stealing round! The bush-rangers don't see them yet! They little expect an attack from that quarter! Now, my friends! Fire away! Keep it up. There go the soldiers! Give way!—pull—pull—reserve your fire! There go the soldiers again! The rascals are puzzled! They don't know what to make of it. Pull away! Pull away!"

We were not long in reaching the shore, and the bush-rangers being engaged with their unexpected enemy, seemed panic-struck. They fired at the soldiers, but without vigour and without aim. In the meantime we were upon them on the other side; and the soldiers, fixing their bayonets, without hesitating, charged in among them.

We got up to them at nearly the same time, and stopped

their retreat. They were so bewildered by the suddenness of the unexpected attack of the soldiers, that they made but little resistance, with the exception of the Gypsy and another man, who seeing that their game was lost, darted into the wood. Thinking that we had them safe within the island, we first turned our attention to the securing of those we had got, whom we bound hand and foot before they had time to recover from their panic; three of them lay dead from the fire of the soldiers, and several were slightly wounded.

"Where's their leader?" cried the magistrate.

"He has escaped for the present, but we are sure to have him at last."

"The boat," said the sergeant; "the boat on the other side—look to it."

It was too late. The Gypsy had been too quick for us. We saw him above a couple of miles from the shore, pulling with his companion with all their might to the main land.

"There they go," said Crab—"and all that we have done is of no use, and I have got one of their buck-shot through my arm; more fool I for going after them. What have I to do with fighting bush-rangers? And there go the two greatest rogues of the lot; they were the ringleaders and the stirrers up of all the mischief; and all our work is to do over again. I'll be bound, before night, they'll commit a dozen murders at least. Well, this is making a silly end of it—that's my opinion!"

"Corporal," said the sergeant, "lose no time; you must put yourself on their tracks; you and your party will be enough for those two; I will take care of the prisoners."

“Put the corporal’s party on shore,” said the magistrate, to the two constables, “where the other boat lands. You can then return and tow it back with you.”

Worrall and his fellow-constables stepped into the boat, and the corporal making the usual military salaam, departed with his men in pursuit of the terrible Gypsy. When they returned, we all crossed over to the main land, much to the joy of our friend Beresford, and the relief of the Government messenger. We immediately set off on our return to the Clyde, when to our surprise we learnt that you had not yet arrived. We feared that you had been killed by the natives, but Crab insisted on immediately going in search of you, as he said you might be lamed or lost in the bush.

Information was brought to us that the magistrate’s horse, on which you had started from the lake, had returned home lame, and without saddle or bridle. This increased our fears for your safety, and we had no difficulty in mustering a sufficient party to aid you in case of danger. Thank God we found you when we did.

“It was just in time,” said I.

“It was, indeed; but that’s over now; and when you get home to your family you will soon recover yourself, and get things to rights again.”

With this we turned ourselves to sleep, and I slept soundly. The morning light found me refreshed and restored, and I roused up the party to lose no time in crossing the river. We found a fording place higher up, and crossed without accident. Beresford placed himself by my side, and we strode cheerfully on.

After a sharp march of some miles, we passed the Shannon, and I began to feel myself again. . . .

"What has become of poor Lucy Moss?" said I. "It was you who saved her life on that awful night. When we left her on our expedition to the lake, she had not recovered consciousness. Is she still alive?"

"Miss Moss has to thank your wife for her recovery," said Beresford, "more than me. But look there! Did you ever see such a shot?—that cockatoo on the end of the branch of the tree there."

"Never mind the cockatoo, man," said I; "we have had shooting enough for one bout; let the cockatoo alone. Well, poor girl, I hope she is grateful to you for her life, when you carried her in your arms on that terrible night that we found her lying on the trunk of the tree over the Clyde. It is not every one that would have perilled his life by scrambling along that tree like an opossum, as you did; and I remember how very kind you were; and when we offered to help you, you said the poor girl was not in the least heavy, and I suppose—but bless the man, what is the matter with him? you are not going to faint are you? And what makes you turn so red in that odd way?"

"It's my arm," said he, "that gives me a twinge now and then."

"Oh!—is it? and who has done it up so nicely? Here's been a woman's hand in this, I'll swear. Was it my wife that sewed on all these little black ribands so prettily—eh?"

"It was not Mrs. Thornley who did it exactly . . ."

"Exactly! What, had anybody else a hand in it?"

"Not particularly—that is, not altogether; but Mrs. Thornley had the kindness to hold my arm—while—I think it was Miss Moss who sewed on the ties."

"Oh! it was; and who"——

"There's the Clyde at last," said Beresford. "Look,—cast your eyes just over that bare branch of the high gum tree—don't you see the water? It can't be more than four miles from us."

"You seem to be in a particular hurry to get back. Nothing wrong about your affairs, I hope?"

"Oh dear, no! The truth is, that—that I want—that is—that I'm anxious"—

'Anxious to do what?'

"To see how your men—that is, my men—have got on with the hedging and ditching since I've been away."

"Indeed!" said I.

I did not make any further observation to my young friend, who suddenly quitted my side, but I thought a good deal, and I said to myself—"I've seen many curious things in my time, but I never knew a young fellow in such a hurry to see a hedge and ditch before!"

But I was now drawing nearer and nearer to home, and that feeling put out of my head all other thoughts. The loud and joyous shouts of our party proclaimed from a distance their approach and their success. In a moment I crossed the memorable tree across the river, and found myself once more in the embraces of my wife and children.

Chapter Twenty-second.

He returns to his Home—Sets about repairing his Disasters—How to build a House with pulverized Earth—Mr. Crab's increased importance, and how sheep may increase from one hundred to two thousand—The building of a stone House resolved on.

It is now fourteen years since the events which I have related happened; but I remember them as if they were of yesterday. Taking my wife in one hand, and my eldest daughter in the other, I led them silently to the humble hut, which now formed our only dwelling. Our hearts were too full to speak. I looked round for William; my wife guessed my thoughts.

"William is out seeking for you over the hills towards Sorrell's Lake."

I looked on my other children, and kissed them one by one.

"Let me be alone," I said, "for a little while:—my head is giddy."

I sat down on a wooden bench, and tried to collect my thoughts; but the revulsion was too much for me. The terrible emotions which I had suffered had shaken me more than I was aware of: the events of a lifetime seemed to have been crowded into the ten days' space since I had left my happy home.

In that brief time how much had I suffered! I had fought in some desperate conflicts! I had been lost for

six days in the dreary and dismal bush ! I had been all but overcome in my death-struggle with the natives ! Desolation now met my eyes where I had left abundance ; and the blackened ruins of my once cheerful cottage lay in a melancholy heap as I passed them by !

Overcome by the sudden rush of all these thoughts which at once assailed me, and overpowered with the surpassing joy of beholding those whom so recently I had never expected to see again, I felt that choking at the throat which seizes on those who are torn by conflicting emotions : mine were joy and sadness. I think my bosom would have burst had not tears come to my relief ; I tried to check them as unmanly and unseemly at such a moment : but they came thicker and thicker, and in the fulness and thankfulness of my joy I sobbed aloud.

My dear wife took my hands and pressed them tenderly ; motioning her to kneel down with me, I raised my heart in gratitude and prayer to that Being, through whose help I had been sustained in my many perils. Then summoning my children, I caressed them again, and my dear William soon after coming in, with all the boisterous gladness of a young heart, shouted out his joyous greeting.

That evening was one of joy and thankfulness ; we did not think of what we had lost, but of what we had gained. But a sort of brain fever was the consequence of the excitement to which I had been exposed, which confined me for many days to my bed.

When I recovered sufficiently to attend to my affairs, I found that I had in a great measure to begin again the work of a settler in the country ; but industry and perseverance will conquer most difficulties ; so I set about

repairing my disasters with a stout heart, and as we all worked willingly, we worked cheerfully, stimulated by the feeling that we were working for ourselves, and that every improvement that we made—every stone that we laid—and every stick that we planted, was on our land, and for the benefit of ourselves and our children.

My first care was to look after my sheep; for that was my main stock, and what I most depended on. I had the mortification to find that my home flock of merinoes had got dispersed in the bush, but my three other flocks at their different runs, consisting of about three thousand, were safe. It took some time to recover my merinoes, for they had strayed away, and had become mixed with the sheep of various neighbours, but I got them nearly all together again after a short time. As to the tame cattle, they were gathered in by degrees, but it cost my horses severe work to get in the wild herds, with which they were mixed.

The worst part of the business was the loss by fire at home of furniture, bedding, books, and indeed of almost everything that the old cottage and the adjacent buildings contained. But there were no lives lost, and that was a great consolation.

My friend Moss was re-established in his log hut on the other side of the river, and I heard that young Beresford was particularly attentive in giving them the benefit of his assistance in putting their little farm to rights, and my daughter Betsy, then sixteen years of age, and inclined to be saucy occasionally, told me very demurely “that Mr. Beresford was so very kind; that he was there every day, showing Miss Moss how to plant her little flower-garden, which must be an exceedingly difficult

thing to do," Betsy remarked, "on the other side of the river, as the flower-garden did not seem to make much progress, although her instructor was always explaining to her from morning to night something or other about it."

This was said in such a sly way, that I looked on Betsy with eyes which betokened some little surprise at her observations, and it suddenly struck me that eight years had passed away since I first came to the Clyde, and that my eldest daughter, now sixteen years of age, was assuming the airs of womanhood.

My son William, too, who had reached his eighteenth year, had lately been throwing out hints on the propriety of his making a visit to Hobart Town to purchase razors. I had put a stop to that sort of presumption some time before by gravely offering him a cart and four bullocks to bring up a razor for him, but I felt that these pretensions would at no distant time assume a character which required care and consideration, and that it was incumbent on me to provide for them in time. These thoughts acted as further stimulants to my exertions.

"This is a bad job, Crab," I began, "but it might have been worse; there have been no lives lost from this sad fire, that is one great consolation; but we can't live without a house; the point to be settled is, what sort of one we shall build. You have seen a good deal of these new sort of houses at Pitt Water, what do you think of them?"

Now it must be premised, that Mr. Crab had become a very important personage in the district of the Clyde. At the beginning of 1817, seven years before, I had prevailed on him to purchase with his small capital a hun-

dred ewes heavy with lamb, and to put them out "on thirds;" which he did with an honest settler on the other side, the Launceston side, of the island.

As the keeper of the sheep was to have one-third of their produce to re-imburse him for his care and expense, two-thirds remained for the owner; and as Crab consumed none, and sold little of the increase, excepting for the purpose of replacing the wethers with breeding ewes, in the course of seven years Crab's original one hundred ewes had increased, notwithstanding theft and all sorts of losses, to two flocks of sheep of above one thousand each, which he had established on separate runs, to the eastward of Salt Pan Plains. He had continued to live with me in my house, and was considered, as he considered himself, a part of the family, and maintained his authority as the autocrat of the ploughs and corn-fields.

I must add, that having now attained the age of sixty-eight, he had become more obstinate in his opinions than ever, and my recent calamities, which he declared he had all along foreseen and expected, confirmed him in his conviction of his superior penetration and sagacity.

"What do you think, Crab," said I, "of running up a pisé house? It's easily done, and we can do it with the men we have got about us."

Crab slowly raised himself from the log of a tree on which he was sitting, and placing on the rough table of gum-tree boards his two hard and brown hands, he inclined his head a little forwards to me, and with much solemnity replied:—

"And is it possible, Mr. Thornley, that you are thinking of building another house in this miserable place? Have you not had warning enough, by bush-rangers, and

by natives, and by fires, to show you the wrongness of all that you have done? And eight years ago, in this very place, did I not tell you what would happen? and hasn't it happened? And now you are thinking of beginning it all over again! Why, it's a mere tempting of Providence!"

"Oh, papa," said Betsy, "do let us go back to England. Since all this work about the bush-rangers and natives, I declare I'm quite frightened; and besides there's not a shop near us, one must send to Hobart Town for everything; and if one wants a new riband for a bonnet, a bullock cart must be sent fifty miles for it. The idea of bringing up a new bonnet in a cart drawn by four bullocks!"

"Nonsense, Betsy," said William; "what do you want with new bonnets up here, where there are nothing but cows and sheep to see you? ('ain't there, though?" I thought Betsy muttered). To be sure, it is awkward not to have a boot-maker near, and if you want any trifle done to your gun, you must take it to town. That certainly is a nuisance."

"Miss Betsy is a very sensible young lady," said Crab, "and I think the best thing to be done is for us all to go home again to England, and there we can have a nice little farm, and in Shropshire I know many that are to be got at a low rent."

"Rent!" said I; "that would be a settler, Crab, if there was no other argument against it. Thank heaven! we have done with rent! Our land is our own; we are our own masters; depending on our own exertions for prosperity and fortune!"

"A pretty prosperity has come of it!" said the indo-

mitable Crab. "It's a very prosperous state of affairs, isn't it, when a man is shot at day after day by bush-rangers, and gets lost in the bush, and is hunted by natives—and—I ask you, now, master, whether, in your conscience, you can deny that you ought at this moment to be a roasted man?"

"A roasted man!" said my wife. "Good heavens! Mr. Crab, what odd ideas you have!"

"But I'm not roasted yet," said I, "and, excepting that clip which the natives' womera gave me on the leg, I'm not much the worse for it. And, by-the-by, Crab, how do your sheep get on beyond the Salt Pan Plains? Why, you will have more sheep in a short time than you will know what to do with. What would you do with them in England? It would require a good bit of land to feed two thousand sheep; and then the rent! No rent to pay here—eh!"

"Eh!" said Crab—"ah! but it's better to pay rent and have your property safe, than pay it in the shape of bush-rangers, sheep-stealing, and burning, and such like."

"That's a drawback," said I, "it must be confessed; but still, my friend Crab, with all these drawbacks, and in spite of all the inconveniences and disadvantages of this wretched country, as you call it, you have contrived to make two thousand sheep out of one hundred in seven years! I am inclined to think that you would not have got together a flock of two thousand sheep in England in that time, or in any time."

"May be not," said Crab—"may be not; but then in England you can sleep in your bed without getting up next morning and finding your throat cut, or your

house burnt about your ears. Well, well—a wilful man must have his way! I suppose you must wait for another disaster worse than this before you'll hear reason; but the end will come at last, and then you'll regret you did not take my advice."

"Come, give us your advice about a pisé house, as you have seen some of them and I have not; will they do?"

"Do! Lord bless you—never think of making a mud-pie and calling it a house. Who ever heard of patting mud up into a heap, and then setting a roof on it? Why, it must crumble to pieces, or be washed away by the first rain that comes. But why talk of a mud house when you have plenty of stone on your own land?"

"Yes; but stone-masons' work is so very expensive in this country, and such a house would take so long in building."

"Of course it would; everything is very expensive in this country; but you should have thought of that before you came into it. But the stone house that I mean is one which you might build of the same sort of stone that the old chimney of the cottage was built of; only to be done in a more sightly manner. Why, you might build a house a hundred feet long for a few hundred pounds, that would really be a place fit for a gentleman to live in, and which some new fool of a settler, with plenty of money, would buy, perhaps, when you went back to England. And I'll tell you what I'll do," continued Crab, in his enthusiasm: "I've too many sheep by a great deal for me to look after. I'll sell one of the flocks, and that shall build the new house

for you, and I'll start to Salt Pan Plains about it this very day."

"Indeed," said I, "you will do no such thing."

"And why not, pray; can't I do as I like with my own sheep?"

"You may do as you like with your own sheep, but you shall not sell them to build our house; there will be about fifteen hundred pounds due to me in another month, which I shall not lend again, so that I shall have plenty of money for house, furniture, and all."

"Well," said Crab, considering a little, "perhaps it's as well; it will be all the same in the end, and you would only lose your money by lending it. Very well; the sheep are sure to increase if you leave them alone. So now to find a good stone-quarry."

"Let us all go," said my wife; the day is beautiful. I want to see Mrs. Moss on the other side of the river, and you can help us over Lucy's bridge, and leave us in Mrs. Moss's Cottage."

"Come, then," said I; "where's my fowling-piece? and, Will, do you take yours."

"Why, what on earth," said Crab, "do you want with your guns?—you are not going a mile from home."

"Perhaps not; but there's no harm in taking them with us."

"My fowling-piece is dirty," said William; "but here's a musket clean, with the bayonet all ready fixed; and here's a cartouche-box of cartridges."

"A pretty place to live in!" said Crab; "to go a-seeking for a stone-quarry with muskets and fixed bayonets!"

"It's always best to be prepared," said I; "and, to

my thinking, precaution betokens courage, as it shows the calculation of danger, and the predetermination to face it."

It will be seen that it was well, on this occasion, that we did not leave our arms behind us.

Chapter Twenty-third.

Stone-quarries—Manner of Gardening by young Ladies in new Colonies—A Stranger—Miss Betsy suddenly becomes scientific respecting Stone-quarries and other matters—The large Ants resent the intrusion on their territories—Wild cattle hunting—A young Bull gets maddened, and galloping into the Bush, meets with Betsy—Thornley sees her peril and gives her over for lost.

VAN DIEMEN'S LAND abounds in stone of all sorts, and especially in a sort of stone which easily splits into flakes; it is commonly used to build the chimney of a log-house, where bricks and lime are not easily to be had. It is not so sightly as bricks, but it answers the purpose very well, and almost anything in the shape of mud serves for a cement. There was plenty of this sort of stone on my land; indeed, too much of it, enough to build a town, and on one rise there were so many fine flat slabs of stones lying on the surface, that it made one long to find a use for them.

The object of our search was to find a quarry of stone easy to be worked, near the intended site of the house, so as to avoid the expense and trouble of carting. But first we proceeded in a body to the other side of the river, passing in single file over the trunk of the tree which had now obtained the name of "Lucy's-bridge;" Crab brought up the rear, with a crow-bar over his shoulder, which it pleased him to carry on this occasion, for the purpose of raising specimens of the stone.

We found our friends busy about their cottage, which, at Mrs. Moss's request, our diligent neighbour was carefully fortifying. The inside was hardly large enough to contain us all, so we proceeded in a body to the new garden, which Miss Moss, with great taste, had planned near the river.

"Bless me," said Betsy, "why I declare Miss Moss has *two* gardeners to assist her; there's Mr. Beresford sitting on the log of a tree, working dreadfully hard indeed, and explaining, I suppose, something or other; and there's another helping him, only he's too far off to join in the conversation, with a gun over his shoulder. That's a stranger; I wonder who he can be?"

Our approach interrupted young Beresford's dissertation on horticulture, and he came forward with a very red face to greet us, while Miss Moss immediately began to rake about the earth desperately. "Rather cold work," said I, "to be idle. The month of June is not the season to sit still in the open air. A good fire, and the inside of a house, would be more comfortable."

"I thought it was very pleasant," said Beresford.

"So it appeared," said I; "but I can't stop to talk this morning. We are going to look for stone to build our new house. Who is that young stranger? He is very like you."

"That's my brother. You know I have been expecting him for some months. He came up here a week ago."

"What is his age? He is younger than you."

"He is nineteen—four years younger than I am. He has got terrible notions in his head about natives and bush-rangers, and nothing on earth will induce him to

part with his gun: he eats, and drinks, and sleeps with it."

As my friend thus spoke, the stranger advanced, and saluted us with a very good air, and I was prepossessed in his favour at once, by his modest and unassuming manner. I am inclined to think that there was another of the party who regarded him with favourable eyes; but of this I shall have to speak in its proper place.

"Who's for a walk?" said I. "Come, Beresford, man, don't sit on that log all day; a brisk walk will do you good."

"I would go with you with all my heart, but the truth is, I have promised Miss Moss to show her how to trench the ground for Indian corn."

"Trench ground for Indian corn in June! Well, that's a new idea, at any rate. You don't mean to say that you are going to sow Indian corn in the middle of winter?"

"Sow it! No—not to sow it, but there's nothing like being prepared in time."

"Right there," said I; "and as you like to prepare in time, had you not better come with us and look out for a convenient stone quarry, for it seems to me you'll soon be wanting a larger house than your present one?"

Miss Moss, at this recommendation, worked away with her rake again with great energy; but she had the courage to say, "The surgeon, Mr. Beresford, desired you not to use your arm; and you know he said that any exertion would be dangerous. But pray don't let me keep you from joining your friends. I have plenty to do inside the cottage."

So saying, she bid us a hasty adieu, and we proceeded



QUARRYING STONE FOR THE NEW HOUSE.

on our walk. Beresford said he had to speak to Mr. Moss about some sheep; but his brother, he added, would be glad to accompany us to see the country.

"Well, then," said I, "you can stay with your mother, Betsy, and we will go on with our search."

"I should like to go with you," said Betsy; "the day is so fine, and I am so fond of seeing stone quarries."

"Fond of seeing stone quarries!" thought I; "what has come to the hussy; she never was so interested about stone quarries before. Come, then," I said, "and don't complain of being tired, for we shall make a long walk of it, perhaps."

We re-crossed the river, and struck into the bush, William going on before, and I and Crab following sedately behind, while Betsy and the stranger came after us. We soon came on some stone quarries, but we saw none that pleased us. There were so many that we were fastidious about them.

"I know of a capital lot of stone just on the other side of that little green hill," said Crab, "if it would not be too far for carting; but it all lies on the surface, so the distance of cartage would be saved by the ease of getting at the stone."

"It can do no harm for us to see it," said I, "so let us push on. Betsy! where the deuce is the girl? Don't loiter behind so, or you'll be lost in the bush, and your new acquaintance would not be able to help you in such a strait, I think, eh?"

"Oh, no fear, papa, of being lost in the bush, close at home. I have more fear of the wild cattle that the men are bringing in to-day."

"Wild cattle!" said George Beresford; "are the cattle then so wild here? are they savage when molested?"

"Savage!" said Crab, "there's nothing savage about the poor things; but they are angry at times, and so would you be if you had half a dozen men on horseback riding after you for some hours, and cracking their whips at you enough to deafen a gum-tree. They are wildish a bit now and then, and when there's a mob of them rampaging along they can't stand on ceremony. You must get out of their way, that's all. A little more to the left, master, if you please; no need to go over a hill when you can go round it. There's no end to hills in this country."

We walked on till we had gone about two miles from home, when we came upon a splendid lot of stones, of all shapes and sizes, and Crab, in his zeal, began to use his crow-bar to heave up a slab here and there, to see what was under it. Our new acquaintance, to manifest his desire to render assistance in our search, took the crow-bar, and worked away with great vigour in an irregular pit of stones, which looked of an inviting quality. He had not proceeded far in his task, before he uttered a sharp cry, and began to dance about.

"What's the matter?" said William; "has the crow-bar fallen on your toe?"

"Toe! it's not my toe! I've been bit by a snake!"

"A snake! It's strange that we did not observe it! But I see; it's no snake, it's the red ants that you have disturbed, and one has given you a nip. I'll soon bring some more of them out."

So saying, he took the crow-bar, and, peering about,

struck it lightly at the entrance of the passage several times. Immediately a swarm of these prodigious ants sallied out, elevating their nippers, and showing signs of anger and irritation. These red ants are about an inch and a half long, very bold and fierce in their nature, and they do not hesitate to attack any intruder on their domains. About four years before this time, one of my men, who was employed in raising stone about a half a mile from the house, was obliged to abandon the quarry from the numbers and determined hostility of these courageous and daring creatures.

We, who knew what was coming, got out of the way, but our friend, with the curiosity of a new comer, waited in the pit, to examine the appearance and motions of this curious army of ants. He did not stay there long, however, for the angry ants attacked him in a moment, and, biting his shins, and crawling under his clothes, set him a-dancing in a manner that did infinite credit to his agility. The pleasure of this novel sensation was not increased by the loud laughter which accompanied his capers from all—all excepting my daughter Betsy, whose usual love of mirth had become subdued, from politeness and in courtesy to a stranger.

“For heaven’s sake, William,” she called out, “do help Mr. Beresford ; those horrid ants will bite him to death.”

“I’ll fire at ’em,” said William, “if he will only stand still and let me pick ’em off one by one. But, never mind, they only bite, and they are not venomous—at least much—and I never knew any harm come from their bites. Our Bob has been bitten by them all over, and he’s used to them now, he says, and, upon my word, I think the ants learned to know him, for they left off attacking him after a bit.”

"This will do, Crab," said I; "this is capital stone, and plenty of it, and it's all down hill, or nearly so, to the new house. So here we will fix for our quarry. And now we will go home."

"Not home yet, papa; Mr. Beresford wants to see the falls of the Clyde."

"Well, do you and William go with him, and show him the falls; but they are little worth seeing in June; the spring-time, in September or October, is the time for the falls, after the rains; then they are a sight worth seeing."

Leaving the young party to continue their walk, I and Crab turned our steps homewards, as I expected a herd of wild cattle to be driven into the stock-yard during the day. When we got home, I found that my wife had returned. She blamed me for letting Betsy go so far from home, in these troublous times, as she called them; but I told her there was no fear of bush-rangers or natives in the daytime so near a settlement, and we followed such occupations as demanded our attention. When the time had elapsed, however, for Betsy's return home, my wife began to be uneasy at her absence, and urged me to go in search of her."

"She is gone into some friend's house on the way," said I; "there's no cause for being uneasy; William is with her, and the falls are not a quarter of a mile from a settler's house."

But all I could say could not calm my wife's uneasiness, for her late troubles had made her timid and nervous, till I began to be uneasy myself. I took my double-barrelled fowling-piece, and bidding two of my men, whom I could trust, to come with me, I set out in the direction of the falls.

I had not proceeded a hundred yards before I thought I heard the distant lowing of cattle, and presently after the cracking of the hunters' whips apprised me that the herd which I had been expecting all day was approaching the stock-yard.

Judging that an additional rider would be of use in forcing them into the yard, I returned to the hut, near which temporary stables had been erected, and putting a saddle on the horse that was there—the two others were out after the cattle—I was soon in the midst of the sport.

The forcing the cattle into the stock-yard is the most difficult part of the task, as they are apt to break away when they scent the enclosure, and to divide in separate mobs, which it is exceedingly difficult to get together again, as they fly off in all directions, and become savage and furious as they are hard pressed by the shouts and whips of the huntsmen.

In collecting them from their various runs, it is the practice for three to five or six horsemen to set out together at the earliest break of day. The horsemen are provided with a roughly-made whip, with a leather thong, and a peculiar sort of lash at the end of it, made from an old silk handkerchief, which is the best material for producing a loud crack.

To make this lash, two strips of an old silk handkerchief, about six inches long, are wetted, and twisted tight separately, and then twisted tightly together. It is surprising to those who have never tried this peculiar lash, to hear the astonishing loud crack that it will make. It is the noise of these cracking whips that frightens the cattle into the required direction; and without these whips it would be useless to attempt to drive them.

Thus provided, the hunters proceed to the spots where they divine that cattle have rested the preceding night, observing especially the brows of hills sheltered from the wind. When they see a mob of cattle, a dozen, more or less, they note the spot, and pass on, taking care not to disturb them, and continue their search after more.

In this way they proceed, spreading themselves over the country, and going twenty miles, perhaps, from home, noting the different little mobs here and there on their passage. They then gently urge the mob farthest off towards the mob nearer home, and then urge the mob so joined to the next one, and so on.

After a little while, the cattle begin to suspect mischief, and then the furious riding begins, and the smaller the number, the more difficult it is to drive them. A horseman takes each flank of the mob, and the rest of the hunters take charge of the cattle from behind. Every now and then the cattle break off to the right or left, and then the horseman, with loud shouts, pursues them, and with the cracking of his whip drives them back to the main body. Sometimes the whole body of cattle will make a rush to escape, and then the utmost efforts of the hunters are necessary to prevent them from dispersing.

The country being in a state of nature, and for the most part covered with dead timber, the sort of riding may be imagined. Copses are dashed through, dead trunks of trees are continually to be leaped, for the herd must be followed and kept in the right direction at all hazards to man and horse; and whatever the country, it must be taken, up hill or down hill, up precipice or down precipice.

Sometimes the cattle take a direction round the brow of a steep mountain, with a wall of turf on your left hand, and a precipice of a hundred feet or two on your right! No matter; on you must go; hooting, shouting, and cracking the never-resting whip, and never thinking of the danger till you have passed it.

Talk of fox-hunting! It is nothing compared with wild cattle-hunting! and as to the excitement, cattle-hunting is ten times more exciting, but it must be added, incomparably more dangerous! Besides, in cattle-hunting you see your game, and a multitude of wild cattle in a state of fury from hard driving is a grand and imposing spectacle. I say nothing of the additional enlivenment of becoming the pursued instead of the pursuer, from some devil of a bull taking it into his head to resent the affront put upon his independence. Then the chase assumes a very different complexion, and cool must be the man and steady must be the rider to escape when the wild bull is determined, and inclined to be vicious.

I remember one of my men was chased between the Shannon and the Clyde for ten miles on end by a furious bullock, who kept his horse at the stretch of his speed the whole way, till the rider came to a deep part of the Clyde, when he dashed in, glad to escape from his tormentor any way. When a pretty good number are collected in this way, they are more easily driven, as they are in each other's way, and impede each other's motions; but they are the more dangerous when they make a rush at you. The only thing to be done then is to ride with all your speed to the right or left, and keep up with them in a parallel line till their speed is spent; then the work has to be done again.

On the present occasion, my men had collected a mob of above a hundred, some of which belonged to other parties, and as it was winter-time, and the cattle were not exhausted by the heat, as they sometimes are in summer—for I have known a fat bullock to lie down when thus driven from exhaustion, and I have not been able to make him get up even by whipping him—they were in fine condition for a run, and I soon saw that there would be more than ordinary difficulty in getting them into the stock-yard, which was less than a quarter of a mile from the building where I was temporarily residing.

We were five horsemen in all; three of my own horses, and two of my neighbour's, who, from love of the sport, had joined in the hunt. We had just got them to the entrance of the yard, where they stood hesitating and obstinate, when a fine young bull uttered a savage cry, and, darting between me and another rider, galloped into the plain, followed by the whole herd.

It was quite a narrow escape for both of us, and we were only just in time in avoiding the rush of the infuriated animals. But we were too well used to the work to be baffled, and in a short time we had them all under command, though it required all the shouting and whip-cracking that we could raise to urge them to the entrance again. As it was, I think we should have lost them, had it not been for two cows belonging to our tame herd, which, fortunately, this time, were in front, and they being used to the yard, cantered in to avoid the pressure from behind, and then another simultaneous shout on our parts, and a renewed cracking of whips forced them all in; then up bars, and we had them safe.

The young bull, however, did not approve of the trick,

and he bellowed and galloped about the yard in a state of perfect fury, lashing his tail about, and plunging his horns into the ground till he got quite mad. In his anger he made a dash at the heavy logs of which the yard was built, and butting his head against them, he made the whole stöekade vibrate with the concussion. Finding it too strong to break through, he bellowed and plunged about with increased rage, when suddenly he made a run at the logs, and with one desperate bound he leaped right over them, although they were nearly eight feet high, and dashed into the bush.

I admired the vigour and determination of the animal, and as we did not want him, I let him go his way, when it suddenly struck me that the course which he had taken was the same which my daughter would be pursuing on her way home. I communicated my fears to my two men, who were standing by me, and, instantly seeing the danger, they mounted their horses without delay, and we proceeded after the furious animal, intending to head him, so as to turn him away from the path where he might do mischief.

The short time that elapsed between his escape and my thought of its danger was sufficient to enable him to get considerably ahead of us, I took the way to the right, being best mounted; and my horse being fresh, I put him to the top of his speed, riding over everything in my way in my terrible anxiety.

A couple of miles were passed in almost less time than I have taken to relate it, when my worst fears were realized! I beheld the infuriated animal, rendered more furious by our pursuit and our cries, with its horns near the ground, in the act of rushing towards my daughter

Betsy, who, with my son and the young stranger, seemed for the moment stupified with horror at the suddenness and the imminence of the danger.

The red ribands of the unfortunate bonnet about which poor Betsy had been so facetious a few days before, as being honoured with a cart and four bullocks for its special conveyance from Hobart Town, were streaming in the wind, and whether or not that colour is really hateful to cattle, I do not know, but in the present instance the raging bull seemed to me to disregard her two companions, and with an appalling bellowing that made the woods re-echo, and filled me with a heart-rending fear, which I cannot describe in words, it rushed to the spot where my poor girl, in an agony of terror, with eyes fixed and hands uplifted, had fallen on her knees before him.

The furious brute rushed on, and I had already given up my dear child for lost, when I saw the young stranger with a bound leap forward between them;—instantly falling on one knee, and taking a rapid but cool aim, he fired—the ball with which his musket was loaded struck the animal between its horns, and the huge bull suddenly tumbled over and over on the grass, striking down, in its plunging course, our heroic preserver, and, as I afterwards found, breaking his musket to pieces.

Almost at the same moment I reached the spot, and at the report of the musket, and the fall of the bull, my well-trained and intelligent horse immediately checked himself, and stood snorting with inquiring ears. For some seconds no one stirred; the bull lay on the ground dead; my daughter knelt with her hands clasped, still in the attitude of fear, and George Beresford remained motionless by her side.

Chapter Twenty-fourth.

The Stranger saves Betsy's life—The Surgeon appears again—
Thornley sets off for Hobart Town.

THE two horsemen who had accompanied me from the stock-yard now dismounted, and their advance broke the spell of fear and doubt which for a moment entranced my faculties. I threw myself from my horse, and clasped my daughter in my arms. Grasping my hand convulsively, she rose from her knees, and turned to the spot where our young friend was lying insensible and pale. Betsy did not speak, but kneeling down by the body, clasped her hands, and looked up to us appealingly.

"Ride hard to the surgeon's; it's not half a mile off," said William to one of the men. "Give him your horse to come back on."

In less than five minutes the surgeon was with us. The young man still remained insensible.

"We must bleed him instantly," said the surgeon. "Raise him up. Hold his arm out—so. Cut open the sleeve of his coat; no time for ceremony. There, that will do; he is all right; you'll see he will come to presently. I hope there are no bones broken."

"Good heavens!" said Betsy, "he will bleed to death."

"No fear of that; do him good; very good blood; body in good state—so it ought to be at his age. There he is—coming to—beautifully. Now we'll bind his arm

up. Who has got something to bind it with? Ah! this red riband will do very well. But you'll spoil your smart bonnet. That's it—and I declare here's young Thornley has got a pannikin of water for him. You're a thoughtful lad, and no doubt this young fellow will do as much for you another time."

"Thank ye," said Will; "I hope I shall not have to trouble him. I wish he had let me shoot the bull, though; but Betsy was right before me, and I was afraid of hitting her if I fired."

"You needn't be sorry that you didn't kill the bull, Master William," said one of the men; "there's Mr. Crab will be in a terrible taking about it; it was his favourite one of the herd, and a nice, tight, clean-made cretur he was, poor fellow."

"That's right, Mr. ——— what's his name?" said the surgeon.

"Mr. George Beresford," said Betsy; "he is Mr. Beresford's brother."

"Oh! the brother that's going to be married to Lucy Moss:—well, then, Mr. Beresford, how do you find yourself? Pain anywhere?"

"I feel a little faint—where's the bull?"

"There he is; but I hope he is not only stunned too; perhaps he'll start up and give us a poke. Let us examine him a bit. He's quite dead. Struck between the horns! a lucky shot, by George! You have had a narrow escape, some of you."

"A capital shot, sir; but Mr. Crab will not like it. I really don't know what he will do! this bull was such a pet of his! He saved it between four and five years ago, from being killed—like. I know I shouldn't like to be the one to tell him of it."

“Rather an odd animal to make a pet of; but every one to his taste. Now, my young friend; I recommend you to go home, and go to bed, and lie still for a day or so. There are no bones broken, but you may have received more injury than appears at first, and the best way is to guard against it, to avoid fever and so forth. But what’s the matter with the young lady, eh? Oh! fright; well, it is allowable for young ladies to be frightened. Let me feel your pulse. There, shake hands with the gentleman—‘your preserver,’ as you call him. Proper to be grateful: very right feeling;—pulse not quite right, though! Odd sort of fluttering! There—that will do, young gentleman—you needn’t be shaking hands all day! Get home and keep quiet.”

So saying, our excellent and kind-hearted surgeon took his leave, and I with Betsy and William returned home. On my arrival there, I found a letter for me which had been sent express from Hobart Town, requiring my presence as a witness on the approaching trial of the bush-rangers who had been captured on our late expedition. As the matter admitted of no delay, I immediately prepared for my departure, intending to ride about eighteen miles before night, and sleep on the road. Giving such directions as were necessary in my absence, I slung my fowling-piece over my shoulder, and set off on my journey.

Chapter Twenty-Fifth.

The facetious Attorney—Colonial mode of getting rid of a Wife—Thornley attends an execution which makes him Sick—he returns homewards—A Chase after Sheep—Encounter with a bush-ranger.

I SLEPT that night at the Green Ponds, and met with nothing remarkable. I got into town about four o'clock next day, and ascertained that the trial of the bush-rangers was to take place in a few days.

As I had nothing particular to do, I amused myself with walking about, and I looked at the bit of land that I had bought a month or two before, and it seemed to me that it would be better if I could have the hundred pounds which I had given for it in my own pocket again; but I could not find any one who would give the money for it down; there were plenty who would have bought it on credit at nearly double the price, but I did not like that way of dealing; so after walking over it very discontentedly, I came back to my inn in no very good humour.

I found a friend of mine, the sheriff, waiting for me, who was terribly out of spirits at having to attend the execution of four men the next morning, one of them for sheep-stealing, and two for bush-ranging; the fourth man's case was a remarkable one, which, as I find it noted in my journal, I will relate as illustrative of the manners and customs of the colony at that period.

I dined with the sheriff that day, and the attorney, Mr. Kasay, who defended the murderer, happened to be present, and he was very merry with the story, the more so as the sheriff being out of sorts, the attorney good naturedly wanted to raise his spirits with stories of murders and suicides, and such like.

I shall endeavour to give the story in the lawyer's own words, for I confess that, horrible as it was, I could not help feeling an inclination to laugh at the way in which it was told. But lawyers get callous to scenes of crime and misery from their professional habits, as surgeons come to disregard the cries of a patient during an operation.

"It was a very bad case," said the lawyer, "as I told my client from the first; but of course it was my duty to do what I could for him. He followed the trade of a pork-butcher, and one day, when he had a quarrel with some other fellow—he was a baker—he took his knife, with which he was accustomed to operate on his pigs, and '*more suo*' stuck it into his acquaintance, and ripped him up '*secundum artem*.'"

"He must have been a clever fellow at his trade, for the stickce didn't need a second cut; he died, of course, and my gentleman was duly committed, and all that. I tried hard for him at the trial to get it turned into manslaughter, on the ground that the sticking was not done with '*premeditation*;' for, as we argued, his knife being in his hand, which was a sort of implement of trade, he couldn't help, from habit (we are all creatures of habit), from sticking it into anything in his way that seemed to want it.

"But it wouldn't do. The judge was as crusty as if,

he had supped off pork-chops the night before, and the jury were tired, and wanted to get their dinner. So they soon made up their minds about it, and we were found guilty of course. So my man was marched off to the condemned cell to wait till they were ready to hang him; no pleasant contemplation: but it's nothing when you're used to it.

"It's curious what a revulsion it makes in a man's feelings when he is found guilty. I've had many a fine fellow through my hands, who had been as dashing a chap as you'd wish to see, up to that point, and with all the impudence of oppressed innocence; but when the foreman turns up the whites of his eyes—(you may always tell what's coming by their sanctified looks)—and whispers out that little word 'Guilty!' Lord! what a change comes over the brave fellow in the dock; but all this is nothing; I shall come to my story presently.

"You know Parson Jorawaigh? He's the man to stir 'em up! Only give him a little time, sir, and he'll make a poor devil turn himself completely inside out—what the Scotch call 'making a clean breast of it!'

"Well, sir, my friend the pork-butcher grew very religious after he was condemned, as I have observed most people do when they are going to be hanged; and you know the motto among the convicts, 'Never give away a chance.'

"The parson stuck to him, and, as the gaoler said, put the poor wretch into such a stew, that he declared privately to him that he would prefer being hanged—much, very much prefer it—to having any more of the parson's jaw. But the parson is not the man to neglect his duty, and he kept walking in to him day after day, till at last

he got the 'penitent,' as he called him to me, to confess; and a pretty confession it was!

"This was his fourth murder! Yes, sir, positively his fourth! And who do you think were the victims of the organ of destructiveness, so largely developed—for it all goes by bumps, you know, now-a-days—in the head of this modern Bluebeard? His three wives! that is, he confessed to three—how many more he killed one really can't say; but the parson was satisfied with his confessing to three, and 'talked' to him no more.

"But the most curious part of the story is the way in which he did it. Upon my life, I'm not sure that it's right to tell the secret; there are so many ready to take advantage of it. But, however, as we are among friends, I'll trust to your discretion, never to repeat it to a married man. It was very ingenious; quite original. Well, we live and learn. It would make the fortune of a man in London for a tragedy, or a farce; only it is so very dreadful.

"His plan, sir, was this. His wife got drunk, or he made her so—all the same thing: when she was in that happy state, what was more natural than that she should throw herself on the bed, face downwards? and if she neglected to place herself in that position, why it was very easy to turn her over, eh? My gentleman then clapped a pillow on her head, and sat upon it, 'as long,' as he expressed himself, 'as he thought was necessary.'

"Horrible! isn't it? To think what some men will do to get rid of their wives! And the rascal confessed, that as he sat there, he used to smoke his pipe, 'to take off the dulness,' as he said. It's very dreadful to think of! But really there's something droll in the idea!

Not but that I feel the atrocity of such an act—although the woman was his wife—it was a cool trick—very cool!

“When the job was done, as he confessed, he went to the public-house hard by, and staid there drinking and smoking, till the news came that his poor wife was found dead! But all seemed fair and square. It seemed that the woman had got drunk!—natural enough—had fallen down on the bed with her face on the pillow—got smothered!—natural enough;—the husband did not express any particular sorrow at the event—natural enough. All seemed right, and while some pitied him on account of the melancholy occurrence, others congratulated him on having got rid of a drunken wife.

“So after a short time he married another. She went off the same way. He was a man of nerve, however, and he tried a third. Same as before. ‘The neighbours did talk,’ he said, about this last melancholy occurrence;’ but he put on a suit of mourning, bran-new, with black crape round his hat, and attended evening prayer in his neighbourhood, regularly, so he was considered a model of a husband, but peculiarly unfortunate.

“How many more wives he might have murdered it is impossible to tell, had not this last misfortune stopped his fun. Parson Jorawaigh says he is the most penitent lamb he ever had the happiness to save! but for my part, I don’t think much of the penitence of a rogue going to be hanged! And if the parson has not more luck with his miserable soul than I have had with his miserable body, I must say that my friend the pork-butcher will be in a worse mess after he is hanged than

before. However, to-morrow he will have a sheriff's breakfast, eh ! old boy, a hearty choke and a caper ! and you will have the particular satisfaction of ridding the world of a vagabond ! Smothering his wives was bad enough !—still there might have been some excuse for that—but killing a baker was going too far, particularly in this place, where bakers are wanted."

The sheriff, who was a mild and gentlemanlike man, of great benevolence of character, and of rather a nervous temperament, did not relish the vivacious remarks of the facetious attorney. I should be sorry to be the means of exhibiting the latter personage in any light that might seem unfavourable, which would be contrary to my desire, and an injustice to him, for he was one of the best of his tribe ; and it is only due to him to record, that he has often befriended a client in difficulties, by discounting his bill at sixty per cent. (on good security, of course), without charging his customary fee of six-and-eight-pence for attendance in the transaction ; and so for the present I leave him.

The next morning, at the request of my friend the sheriff, I accompanied him to the place of execution. I had never witnessed this painful scene before, and I made a vow never to witness it again. I should not perhaps have made mention of the circumstance in my journal, if it had not been for the remarkable coolness of one of the sufferers. He was a fine man, and I could not help thinking it was a pity to deprive a human being of life for such an offence as sheep-stealing ; but the practice had risen to such a mischievous height at that time, that it was thought imperatively necessary by the Government to make some severe examples.

That man's death, however, haunted me for months after. I was standing at the foot of the ladder up which the condemned had to mount, and for more than a minute I stood side-by-side of this man, who was the last in the line, and who had to wait while some mistake about the ropes on the platform above was remedied. I exchanged some words with him, which very much prepossessed me in his favour, and he spoke with all the self-possession of a man going about some ordinary business instead of to be hanged. The under-sheriff had to draw his attention to the matter in hand—for the poor fellow was quietly talking with me—by hailing him from the platform:—

“Now, my good man, we are waiting for you.”

“I beg pardon, sir, I was only talking to this gentleman; I'll be up in a moment!”

Lightly stepping up the ladder, he joined his associates above, and presently after, the falling of the platform warned us that all was over! I went back to my inn, sick at heart, and with a wretched headache. I threw myself on the sofa, and remained there the greater part of the day. The next morning, vexed with myself, I did not know why, and tired with the sight of the town, I set off home, without waiting for the trial of the bush-rangers, as there was evidence enough without me, and glad to get rid of the business.

I had some money matters to arrange with a settler at New Norfolk, so I took that road, intending to cut across the country to the Clyde. I stopped at New Norfolk that night, and proceeded on my journey early the next morning. There was nothing to prevent my reaching home before night, though the country was hilly, as my

horse was in a good condition. I had no fear of bush-rangers or natives, for all the bush-rangers excepting two had been taken; and of natives I never had any fear when armed and on horseback.

I met with nothing worth noting till I got within about eight miles from home, when I saw a lot of sheep with my brand on them, which I knew at once were part of my home flock of merinoes. Impelled by that sort of acquired instinct which prompts a settler, I think, to go after his lost stock wherever he comes across them, I followed the sheep, which led me a pretty dance over the hills.

There were not above twenty of them, but they scudded away like deer; for lost sheep soon become wild in Van Diemen's Land, and it surprises those who have not had experience of their habits, to find how fast and how long they can run; it is quite a chase. Without a dog and alone, I had no chance with them. My hunt after these sheep, however, had drawn me near one of the steep hills overlooking the Clyde; and as my horse was rather fagged with the run over the hilly country of that district, I thought I would give him a little rest and a drink; so, dismounting, I led him by a circuitous path down to the water, where there was a small patch of rich grass, and tethered him there. I then re-ascended the hill to look about me, for it seemed to me that I had fallen on a little nook where there was good feed for five or six hundred sheep, or perhaps more, which no one had taken possession of.

I was scanning the place with a wistful eye, and had advanced to the edge of a precipice overlooking the river, and about a hundred feet above it, the better to take in

the prospect, when I observed a man emerging from a thicket of bushes, at some little distance, with a gun in his hand. He had the appearance of a stock-keeper, and not thinking of bush-rangers at the moment, I supposed him to be some one who had been beforehand with me in bespeaking a good run.

I felt a little disappointed at the sight, for I had already in my mind established a stock-hut near the spot, and was calculating how many sheep it would feed, while the supposed stock-keeper continued his advance towards me. My fowling-piece was lying on the grass, as I had taken it off to ease myself while I was taking a survey of the country; but in truth I was not thinking of the necessity of using it, being near the Clyde, and having no thought of the bush-rangers.

In the meantime, the man approached me nearer and nearer, and an odd manner which he seemed to have of holding his musket excited my suspicions. I observed him more attentively, and to my exceeding surprise, and I must add, consternation, I recognised the features of the Gypsy leader of the late gang of bush-rangers. I had only time to snatch my fowling-piece from the grass, when, pointing his musket at me, at a distance of about fifty yards, he called out to me to lay down my arms! My gun was already pointed at him, and my only notice of his command was to cock it, and place my finger on the trigger, ready to fire.

Chapter Twenty-sixth.

Awkward predicament—The Bush-ranger declares himself—Unexpected appeal.

WE remained in this position for nearly a minute, till I felt my arms ache with holding out my gun in the attitude of taking aim; I lowered it, with the muzzle, however, still pointed at the bush-ranger, and with my finger on the trigger. At this movement, I observed he hesitated a little; and then lowered his gun as I had done.

I was at a loss what to do at this extraordinary adventure. I did not like to be the first to fire, for he might have companions at hand; and I guessed he was unwilling to run the risk of firing at me, for if he missed he would be at my mercy.

As I anxiously examined my antagonist, it seemed to me that he had a wearied and subdued appearance. So far as his rough garments and his grisly beard went, he looked ferocious enough; but there was something in his eye which conveyed to me the feeling that he had no mind to make a fight of it, if he could avoid it. Impressed with this idea, I threw my gun over my arm, and motioned him to do the same.

“Who are you?” said I, “and what do you want?”

“Who are you?”

“One who does not wish to do you any harm, even if you are what I suspect you to be.”

"And what do you suspect me to be?"

"You look as if you had taken to the bush; but I don't want to meddle with you, if you don't meddle with me."

At these words he advanced towards me—within a dozen yards or so.

"I see," he said, "you are not one of the soldiers—I think I can trust you."

"Don't come any nearer," said I; "you must excuse me, but the times are dangerous. You may trust me, but you can't expect me to trust you."

"True," he said.

He looked round, and hesitated for a few moments, and then gazed at me earnestly.

"You are one of the old settlers?"

"I am; and my farm is on the banks of this river, about a dozen miles up. My name is William Thornley, and now you know all about me that is necessary for you to know. Who are you?"

I knew who he was well enough, but I did not think it prudent to let him know that I recognised him; so I let things take their course.

"Who am I!" said the bush-ranger. "Ah! that is not easy to say. But, however, I will show you that I can trust you. You will give me your word that you will take no advantage of me? Not that I fear it——"

"Oh! I will give you my word not to attempt anything against you—but what is your object? What do you want with me?"

He made no reply, but laid his gun gently on the grass, and then passed round me, and sat down at a few yards' distance, so that I was between him and his weapon.

"Well, Mr. Thornley," said he, "will that do? You

see I am now unarmed. I don't ask you to do the same, because I cannot expect you to trust to me; but the truth is, I want to have a little talk with you. I have something on my mind which weighs heavy on me, and whom to speak to I do not know. I know your character, and that you have never been hard on your government men, as some are. At any rate, speak to some one I must. Are you inclined to listen to me?"

"I was exceedingly moved at this unexpected appeal to me at such a time, and in such a place. There was no sound, and no object save ourselves, to disturb the vast solitude of the wilderness. Below us flowed the Clyde, beneath an abrupt precipice; around were undulating hills, almost bare of trees; in the distance towered the snowy mountain which formed the boundary to the landscape. I looked at my companion doubtfully; for I had heard so many stories of the treachery of the bush-rangers, that I feared for a moment that this acting might only be a trick to throw me off my guard. Besides, this was the very man whom I knew to have been at the head of the party of bush-rangers who had been captured at the Great Lake.

He observed the doubt and hesitation which were expressed in my looks, and pointed to his gun, which was on the other side of me.

"What more can I do," said he, "to convince you that I meditate neither violence nor treachery against you? Indeed, when you know my purpose, you will see that they would defeat my own object."

"What is your purpose, then? Tell me at once—are you one of the late party of bush-rangers who have done such mischief in the island?"

“I am : and more than that, I am—or rather was—their leader. I planned the escape from Macquarie Harbour ; and it was I who kept them together, and made them understand their strength, and how to use it. But that’s nothing now. I do not want to talk to you about that. But I tell you who and what I am, that you may see I have no disguise with you ; because I have a great favour—a very great favour—to ask of you ; and if I can obtain it from you on no other terms, I am almost inclined to say, Take me to Camp as your prisoner, and let the capture of the Gypsy —— ah ! I see you know that name, and the terror it has given, and still gives, to the merciless wretches who pursue me—I say, let the capture of the Gypsy, and his death, if you will—for it must come to that at last—be the price of the favour that I have to beg of you.”

“Speak on, my man,” I said ; “you have done some ill deeds, but this is not the time to taunt you with them. What do you want of me ? and if it is anything that an honest man can do, I promise you beforehand that I will do it.”

“You will! —— but you do not know it yet. Now listen to me.”

Chapter Twenty-Seventh.

The Bush-ranger's Tale—His Crimes and his Sufferings—His Escape from Macquarie Harbour.

“PERHAPS you do not know that I have been in the colony for ten years. I was a lifer. It's bad that; better hang a man at once than punish him for life; there ought to be a prospect of an end to suffering; then the man can look forward to something; he would have hope left. But never mind that; I only speak of it because I believe it was the feeling of despair that first led me wrong, and drove me from bad to worse. Shortly after my landing, I was assigned to a very good master. There were not many settlers then, and we did not know so much of the country as we do now. As I was handy in many things, and able to earn money, I soon got my liberty on the old condition; that is, of paying so much a week to my master. That trick is not played now, but it was then, and by some of the big ones too. However, all I cared for was my liberty, and I was glad enough to get that for seven shillings a week. But still I was a government prisoner, and that galled me, for I knew I was liable to lose my license at the caprice of my master, and to be called into government employ. Besides, I got acquainted with a young woman, and married her, and then I felt the bitterness of slavery worse than ever, for I was attached to her sincerely, and I

could not contemplate the chance of parting from her without pain. So about three years after I had been in this way, I made an attempt to escape with her in a vessel that was sailing for England. It was a mad scheme I know, but what will not a man risk for his liberty?"

"What led you to think of going back to England? What were you sent out for?"

"Why, now, sir, if I tell you, you will not believe me, perhaps, for there is not a prisoner that is asked the question who will not say that he was innocent; and indeed I don't think it a fair question to ask them, for how can you expect a man to condemn himself?"

"I should not have asked you if you had not begun to tell me your story; but if you don't like to tell me, say nothing."

"I have no reason to care for telling the truth. I was one of a gang of poachers in Herefordshire, and on a certain night we were surprised by the keepers, and somehow, I don't know how, we came to blows, and the long and the short of it is, one of the keepers was killed, and there's the truth of it."

"And you were tried for the murder?"

"I and two others were; and one was hanged, and I and my mate were transported for life."

"Well, the less that's said about that the better; now go on with your story, but let me know what it is you would have me do for you."

"I'll come to that presently; but I must tell you something about my story, or you will not understand me. I was discovered in the vessel, concealed among the casks, by the searching party, and brought on shore with my wife, and you know, I suppose, that the punishment is

death. But Colonel Davey—he was governor then—let me off; but I was condemned to work in chains in government employ; this was a horrid life, and I determined not to stand it. There were one or two others in the chain-gang all ready for a start into the bush, if they had any one to plan for them. I was always a good one at head-work, and it was not long before I contrived one night to get rid of our fetters. There were three others besides myself. We got on the top of the wall very cleverly, and first one dropped down (it was as dark as pitch, and we could not see what became of him); then another dropped, and then the third. Not a word was spoken. I was the last, and glad enough was I when I felt myself sliding down the rope outside of the yard. But I had to grin on the other side of my mouth when I came to the bottom. One of the sneaks whom I had trusted had betrayed us, and I found myself in the arms of two constables, who grasped me tightly. I gave one of them a sickener, and could have easily managed the other, but he gave the alarm, and then lots of others sprang up, and lights and soldiers appeared. I was overpowered by so many. They bound my arms, and then I was tried for the attempt to escape, and the assault on the constable, and condemned to Macquarie Harbour for life."

"I don't want to stop you in your story," said I, "but what has all this to do with the service that you want of me? The sun is going down behind that hill, and——"

"Wait a bit—wait a bit—you will see. I have not told you that my wife brought me a child. It is now seven years old. I loved that child, Mr. Thornley, more than a parent usually loves its child. It was all in all

to me. It was the only bright thing that I had to look upon. When I was sentenced to Macquarie Harbour for life, it would have been a merey to put me to death. I should have put myself to death if it had not been for the thought of that little girl. Well, sir, I will not say more about that. When a man takes to the bush, and has done what I have done, he is thought to be a monster without feeling or affection. But people don't understand us. There is no man, sir, depend upon it, so bad that he has not some good in him; and I have had some experience, for I have seen the worst of us—the very worst—in the most miserable of all conditions, for that Macquarie Harbour is a real hell upon earth! There is no time to tell you about the hardships and the miseries which the prisoners suffer in that horrible place—it soon kills them. But my greatest misery was being deprived of my little girl—my plaything—my darling—my life! I had not been at Macquarie Harbour a month before news came that my wife was dead. I'll tell you the truth, sir, attached to her as I was, I was rather glad than sorry for it. I could not bear the thought of her falling into anybody else's hands, and as our separation was now absolutely and hopelessly forever—it is the truth—I was rather glad than sorry when I heard of her death. But my poor little child! I thought of her night and day, wondering and thinking what would become of her. I could think of nothing else; at last my thoughts began to turn to the possibility of escaping from Macquarie Harbour, desperate as the attempt appeared; for to cross the bush without arms and without provisions, exposed to the attacks of the natives, seemed all but an impossibility. But almost anything may be done, by

resolution and patience, and watching your opportunity. I have learned to know that secret."

I now became interested in the Gypsey's story, judging that some useful information might be got from it, and I rather eagerly asked him—"And how did you escape? how did you do it?"

"Ah! that's a trick worth knowing! but I want you to befriend me, and so I'll tell you all about it."

"How many were there who escaped with you?"

"We were fourteen in all. You know, perhaps, that the labour at Macquarie Harbour is dreadfully severe, and the privations very great; and if the prisoners were not kept down by a most vigilant system of superintendence, there would be mutinies every day. But each prisoner is so watched and guarded, that, working in chains, which are constantly examined, escape is almost impossible; and even if escape were possible, wandering in the bush without arms or provisions is hardly less dreadful. However, we did not think so; we were resolved to escape at all risks, and take our chance of the rest. It was a very difficult matter to communicate together, so as to agree on the plan of escape, and having been deceived once before, I was wary of trusting my secret intention to escape to any suspicious person. You must know that the different gangs that work in chains are watched by overseers, who have their eyes constantly on them, and guarded by sentinels with loaded muskets. It must happen, however, that at some times particular gangs are set to work at a little distance from the rest, on the outside of the general work. It was for one of these occasions that I waited. There were fourteen of us in all, and we went on working—cutting

down timber and dragging it to the sawpits, the usual work there—giving no cause for suspicion, till dusk, when we managed so that we proceeded homeward in a straggling line. There were two sentinels on the line, whom we had to pass, and there were two overseers who followed after us. At a given signal one of our confederates rushed on the sentinel farthest off, while, at the same time, I clasped the sentinel near me round the waist and arms. This prevented them from firing off their muskets, and giving the alarm. While that was doing, another party of us gagged and bound the two overseers. Thus we had them all in our power, and it was but the work of a moment, though it takes longer to tell. The muskets were wrenched from the soldiers, and these, with their cartouch boxes, in each of which we found twenty rounds of ball-cartridge, furnished us with arms. We bound and gagged the soldiers as we had done the overseers, so that you see we accomplished our purpose without taking life; not that we should have hesitated to sacrifice them all, had it been necessary, but it was not, and it's always bad policy, to my mind, to take away life uselessly; it's only wantonness and cruelty to do so, and it prejudices a man on his trial. The next thing to be done was to get rid of our chains, for there was no time to be lost, as we knew that if we were not present at muster, the officer would send to look after us."

Chapter Twenty-eighth.

Passage across the Country of the escaped Convicts—The Bush-ranger's confession—No man so bad but there is some good in him—His last request—His awful death.

“WE scrambled away as well as we could, till we got a little distance off, and out of hearing, and then we set to with a will, and rid ourselves of our fetters, all except three, and those were too tightly fitted to be got off on a sudden without better tools. We got the three chained men along with us, however, as well as we could, for we would not leave them; so we helped them on by turns, and the next day, when we were more easy, we contrived to rid them of their encumbrances. We hastened on all night. I ought to tell you that we heard the bell rung, and the alarm given, but we had gained an hour good, and the ungagging of the sentinels and the overseers, and hearing their story, took up some time, no doubt. Besides, it is not easy to hit on a track in the dusk, and as there were fourteen of us, armed with two muskets, our pursuers would not proceed so briskly as they otherwise might, and would not scatter themselves to look after us. We were without provisions, but we did not care about that, and not being used to long walks, we were soon knocked up. But the desire of liberty kept us up, and we struck right across the country in as straight a line as we could guess. The second day we

were all very sick and faint, and the night before was cold, and we were cramped and unfit to travel. The second night we all crept into a cave, which was sandy inside, where we lay pretty warm, but we were ravenously hungry. We might have shot more than one kangaroo that day, but it was agreed that we should not fire, lest the report of our gun should betray our resting-place to our pursuers. As we lay huddled together, we heard the opossums squealing in the trees about, and two of us, who were least tired, tried to get some of them. When we climbed up the trees, they sprang away like squirrels, and we had no chance with them that way; besides, it was dark, and we could distinguish them only faintly and obscurely. We did contrive, however, to kill five by pelting them on a long overhanging bough, but they remained suspended by their tails, and did not drop, although dead. To hungry men a dead opossum is something, so one of us contrived to climb to them, and get them down; and then we lighted a fire in the cave, quite at the extremity inside, to prevent the flame from being seen, and roasted them as the natives do. They were horrid rank things to eat, and almost made us sick, hungry as we were; but I don't think a hair of them was left among us. The next day we shot a kangaroo, but we feared to light a fire because of the smoke, so we eat it raw. Well, Mr. Thornley, I will not take up your time by telling you every little thing we did in the bush. We came at last ——"

"Did you see any good land in your way?" said I. "The part that you crossed between the settlements and Macquarie Harbour has never been explored. Any good land for a run?"

“Not much; the most of the country we crossed was scrub; a great many stony hills. We saw very few kangaroos, and few signs of them. It’s a poor country; but here and there was a nice bit.”

“Plenty of water?”

“No want of water; but it’s not a good part of the country for a run, if that’s what you’re thinking of. The best part of Van Diemen’s Land is to the eastward; all the western part of the island is far inferior to the east. I could tell you of some good land for sheep run near the eastern coast.

“Thank you,” said I; “but are you not wandering from the subject a little?”

“Oh! I was telling you that we first struck on the outskirts of New Norfolk, and we debated what we should do. Some were for attacking the settlement, and getting arms; but I persuaded them that it would be better for us to endeavour to seize some small vessel, and escape altogether from the colony; and in the meantime to keep ourselves close, and not give any alarm. My companions agreed to this, and we struck across the country to Brighton Plains, and so to Pitt Water, where we expected to find some large boats, or, perhaps, some small vessel, by means of which we might get away.”

“And how was it that you did not follow that plan?”

“We did follow it; we got to Pitt Water, and lay snug there for a while; but we were obliged to rob a settler’s house of provisions for food, and that first gave the alarm. We made a dash at a boat, but it was too late; precautions had been taken, and the soldiers were out after us. We were then obliged to retreat from Pitt Water, intending to get into the neighbourhood of the

lakes, and go farther westward, if necessary, and retreat to the coast, where we judged we should be too far off to be molested."

"You did a great deal of mischief at Pitt Water, before you left it, if all the stories are true?"

"We did, Mr. Thornley, I own it; but my men were determined to have arms, and the settlers of course resisted, and some of my men got wounded, and that made them savage."

"And afterwards you attacked poor Moss's cottage?"

"My men had been told that he had a large sum in dollars at his hut;—I am surprised that settlers can be so foolish as to take valuables into the bush—that was all they wanted."

"But why did you take poor Moss along with you?"

"I was obliged to do it to save his life; some of my men would have knocked him on the head if I had not prevented them. It's true, Mr. Thornley, it is indeed; I saved his life."

"Well—that's something in your favour. And now as the sun is sinking fast, and as the dusk will come on us presently, tell me at once what you would have me do for you."

"Mr. Thornley," said the bush-ranger, "I have told you of my little girl. I have seen her since the dispersion of my party at the Great Lake. You know that I and another escaped. Since then, I have ventured, in disguise, into Hobart Town itself, and have there seen my child. The sight of her, and her embraces, have produced in me a strange feeling. I would willingly sacrifice my life to do her good; and I cannot conceal from myself that the chances are that I must be taken at last; and that if I do

not perish miserably in the bush, I shall be betrayed, and shot, or hanged."

"And what can I do to prevent it?"

"You can do nothing to prevent that end, for I know that I am too deep in for it to be pardoned; if I were to give myself up, the government would be obliged to hang me for example's sake. No, no—I know my own condition, and I foresee my own fate. It is not of myself that I am thinking, but of my child. Mr. Thornley, will you do this for me; will you do an act of kindness and charity to a wretched man, who has only one thing to care for in this world? I know it is much to ask, and that I ought not to be disappointed if you refuse it. Will you keep your eye on my poor child, and, so far as you can, protect it? I cannot ask you to provide for it; but be its protector, and let her little innocent heart know that there is some one in the wide world to whom she may look up for advice—for assistance, perhaps, in difficulty—at all events, for kindness and sympathy. That is my request; will you have so much compassion on the poor, blasted, and hunted bush-ranger as to promise to do for me this act of kindness?"

I gazed with astonishment, and I must add, not without visible concern, on the passionate appeal of this desperate man in behalf of his child. I saw he was in earnest; there is no mistaking a man under such circumstances. I rapidly contemplated all the inconveniences of such an awkward charge as a hanged bush-ranger's orphan. As these thoughts passed through my mind, I caught the eye of the father; there was an expression in it of such utter abandonment of everything but the fate of his little daughter, which seemed to de-

pend on my answer, that I was fairly overcome, and could not refuse him. "I will look after her," I said, "but there must be no more blood on your hands ; you must promise me that. She shall be cared for, and now that I have said it, that's enough. I never break my word."

"Enough !" said he, "and more than I expected. I thank you for this, Mr. Thornley, and could thank you on my knees. But what is that? Look there, a man on horseback—and more on foot. I must be on my guard."

As he spoke, the horseman galloped swiftly towards us. The men on foot came on in a body, and I perceived they were a party of soldiers. The Gypsy regarded them earnestly for a moment, and then ran to his gun, but in his eagerness, he tripped and fell. The horseman, who was one of the constables from Hobart Town, was too quick for him. Before he could recover himself and seize his gun, the horseman was upon him.

"Surrender, you desperate villain, or I'll blow your brains out."

The Gypsy clutched the horse's bridle, which reared and plunged, throwing the constable from his seat. He was a powerful and active man, and catching hold of the Gypsy in his descent, he grappled with him, and tried to pinion his arms. He failed in this, and a fearful struggle took place between them.

"Come on," cried the constable to the soldiers, "let us take him alive."

The soldiers came on at a run. In the meantime the constable had got the Gypsy down, and the soldiers were close at hand, when suddenly, and with a convul-

sive effort, the Gypsey got his arms round the body of his captor, and with desperate efforts rolled himself round and round, with the constable interlaced in his arms, to the edge of the precipice.

“For God’s sake,” cried the constable, with a shriek of agony, “help—help—we shall be over!” But it was too late. The soldiers were in the act of grasping the wretched man’s clothes, when the bush-ranger, with a last convulsive struggle, whirled the body of his antagonist over the dreadful precipice, himself accompanying him in his fall. We gazed over the edge, and beheld the bodies of the two clasped fast together, turning over and over in the air, till they came with a terrible shock to the ground, smashed and lifeless. As the precipice overhung the river, the bodies had not far to roll before they splashed into the water, and we saw them no more.

Chapter Twenty-Ninth.

The Corporal is pleased to make some remarks on the recent Tragedy—He searches the pockets of the deceased—His discoveries—Thornley proceeds in much state to the Magistrate's house—He is restored to his family—Mr. Crab indulges in some peculiar observations on the occasion—Red Ribands produce curious emotions in others besides mad bulls.

FOR some time we stood gazing down the precipice in fearful silence.

"That was a desperate chap, that Gypsey!" said the corporal, who in right of his dignity thought it incumbent upon him to speak first; "who would have guessed that he would be up to that dodge?"

"It's a dodge that has done for him as well as the constable," said one of the soldiers.

"It's well it's no worse," rejoined the corporal. "It might have been one of us, if the constable had not been in such a hurry to make the capture; and you see what he has got by his greediness. However, it's only a constable, so it's no great matter. But pray, mister," he continued, turning to me, "who are you? You were talking to the Gypsey when we first saw you, and you were as thick as two thieves. Steadman, take charge of him. We must take you to camp with us, sir; our orders are to secure the Gypsey and any companions that he may have with him."

"Here's another mess," thought I, "and I am in another pickle with the soldiers; the deuce is in my luck! My friends," said I, "I fell in with the Gypsy by accident. You see there's my horse grazing in the hollow below; I was on my way home when I fell in with the bush-ranger."

"That may be, sir, but it is rather suspicious; and I must obey orders. Bowman, go and fetch up the gentleman's horse."

"I suppose I may ride him?"

"No objection, sir, only we must have hold of the reins. Beg pardon, sir, you know we must do our duty and obey orders; very sorry, sir, but it's always the custom to bind people's arms a little, just to keep them from doing mischief. Excuse me, sir, but you must not move away. Steadman, you are loaded?"

Steadman gave a sign of assent.

"Very pleasant," thought I; "however, they are not so bad as the old sergeant, after all."

"You will have no objection to take me to the nearest magistrate?"

"Where is that?"

"At the Clyde, higher up about eleven or twelve miles."

"We are going that way to report ourselves to the sergeant's party there."

"Then," said I, "let us make all the haste we can, for it's getting late. A two hours' brisk march will take us there."

"I think," said the corporal, "that we ought to be sure that the Gypsy really is dead, as well as the constable."

"Dead!" said Bowman, "he's dead enough I'll warrant; why the falling through the air would kill a man from such a height, without the crash when he came to the bottom."

"Ay, ay," said the corporal;" that's all very well; but one never knows what these bush-rangers are up to. My orders are to take him, and we are to follow him wherever he goes, although I must say——," and here the corporal looked over the precipice with a waggish air—— "I shouldn't like to follow him down this height, eh, Steadman?"

"That would be going beyond our orders, as the major says; but if we are to look for the bodies we had better make haste, before the stream carries them too far down."

We descended accordingly, by a circuitous path, and found that the ground where they had fallen was indented and marked with blood. Following the course of the stream, we presently came to a spot where some dead timber obstructed the current, and there we saw the two bodies, separated and mangled, and quite dead. The soldiers dragged them on shore, I remaining a passive spectator the while, and from the appearance of their remains there could be no doubt that the life of both was extinguished at the same moment that they fell to the earth from that fearful height. The corporal, with much formality, searched the pockets of the dead men, and, with a pencil, noted down their contents.

"Let's take the constable first," said the corporal. "What have we got here? a pair of handcuffs; ah! these come in handy; the bush-ranger won't want handcuffs any more, but they'll do for his mate."

"My good fellow," said I, "surely you are not going to put those handcuffs on me; I have told you who I am, and you will soon learn the truth of it."

"It may be all very right, sir, what you say; but the orders are to secure all the companions of the bush-ranger, and you can't deny that you were sitting cheek by jowl with him when we spied you out. But, wait a bit, Steadman, perhaps the gentleman don't like to put on the darbies because they are wet. What have we got next? It's all smashed; rum! it smells though; it's a pity now that the constable didn't give us a suck out of his rum flash before he toddled over. I can't bear waste."

"Don't you remember that parson-chap told him at New Norfolk to mix water with his rum? He's mixed it now with a vengeance, eh? Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! that's good. What's this? a pocket-book and a lot of papers, but they are all wet."

"Any mopuses?"

"Not a rap!—yes, there is, though—here's one, two, three, nine half-crown notes. Look in his other pockets, Steadman!"

"Nothing but his handkerchief."

"Well, tie up all these things in the handkerchief, and we'll take 'em with us."

"What shall we do with his clothes? It's not a bad suit, only it's so daubed and spoiled from the smash he's had; but we'll take his shoes. And now for the bush-ranger; I suppose he's no great shakes. Clean him out, Steadman."

"My eyes! here's a find! a bundle of one-pound notes!"

"One-pound notes! where the devil did he prig them from, I wonder? whose notes are they? Kemp and Co.—as good as dollars! What has he got in the other pockets?"

"A pair of small pistols; but one's broken, from the fall, I suppose; three pieces of flint, a steel, a bit of punk;—capital stuff this to get a light;—a powder-horn squeezed flat, a bag of balls, a capital clasp-knife; by George! here's a tidy tool to stick into a man! Something in a bag; it's tea! We shall come to a teapot next, I suppose. Here's a jolly lump of tobacco, and a prime little wooden pipe! No more smoking for you, old boy;—and that's all I can find."

"Turn him over; something jingles, I'm sure. Feel inside there," said the corporal.

"He's in such a nasty condition—all smashed; stop, I'll slush him a bit with water. There, now let's see. By George! here's a gold watch, and chain and seals! And look here; sewed up in the breast of his coat there's something, but I'll have it out. Lend me his knife, and I'll rip it up. What's this? something curious, I suppose, by its being so carefully sewed up. There are papers inside by the feel."

At this intimation my thoughts recurred to the bush-ranger's child, and I judged that the parcel, which was carefully enclosed in canvass, and neatly sewed up, might contain something to throw a light on the previous life and history of the man, for I knew it was a common practice with offenders in England to be tried in feigned names, to avoid being traced to their former connections.

"I should recommend you," said I, "not to meddle with that parcel, but to deliver it up to the proper au-

thorities unopened. You may be called to account, perhaps, if anything should be lost or injured."

The corporal surveyed me with a doubtful air, as if he half suspected that I had some object in keeping secret the contents of the packet. Fortunately, this made him more careful in preserving it intact, in order that its secrets might be discovered on a more fitting occasion.

"Give me the parcel," he said to Steadman; "we'll look at it another time. No need to let all people know what's in it," giving a look at me; "and now what's to be done with the bodies? Our order is to bring in the body of the bush-ranger, dead or alive."

"Had you not better consult the magistrate?" said I; "I should think, as the body is sufficiently verified, the best thing to do is to bury it with the constable where they lie."

"Oh! you can verify the body, can you?" said the corporal. "Upon my word, Mister Gentleman Bush-ranger, I think that will go against you at the trial. However, it's not far to the magistrate's; so let us be moving, and get there with our prisoner as quick as we can; and if the magistrate thinks it right, we can come back again for the body."

We set out accordingly, I sitting on horseback in great state, with my arms tied behind me, and the horse led by the bridle by a soldier on each side. The corporal followed behind, after slowly inserting, rather ostentatiously as it seemed to me, a ball cartridge into the muzzle of his firelock, and ramming it down leisurely. The click, click of the iron-ramrod on the ball, I took, as it was intended, as a quiet hint to me to be on my good behaviour.

In a little more than a couple of hours we reached the house of the magistrate, to whom I explained my adventure, and on his assurance the corporal released me, or rather handed me over to the custody of the civil power. All the papers and chattels which had been found on the person of the deceased were placed in the safe-keeping of the magistrate; and I took care to point out particularly to his notice the curious packet discovered within the breast of the bush-ranger's coat. I then hastened home, but the news had already preceded me, that I was taken into custody by a party of soldiers for joining the bush-rangers, and as Crab immediately surmised, was to be summarily shot. I found my wife and family in the utmost consternation, but I soon assured them of my safety and good condition, by demanding instantly a supply of mutton-chops, which were speedily served up. When I had satisfied my first hunger, I related my adventure with the Gypsy bush-ranger. My wife shook her head when I came to the part about his little girl, and Crab, who was sitting sulkily in the corner, and had been out of humour, as I was privately informed, ever since the death of his pet bull, gave a horrible grin when I mentioned my promise.

"Upon my word," said he, "this is a nice country to live in, isn't it? If it can grow nothing else, it can grow bush-rangers, however, and now honest people are engaged to look after the breed. It's lucky, though, master, that your friend, the Gypsy, did not give you a hug over the precipice. Upon my life, it's droll—very droll. Here are you, an old Surrey farmer, that one would think would have gone on in the regular jog-trot way all the days of your life, like other quiet folk,

and if you haven't been engaging in more adventures than ever were told in a story-book! Dearee me—dearee me—the older one grows, the more one learns. If anything more was wanted to determine me to leave this wretched country, it's this last affair. And then to have a bush-ranger's child to keep! My goodness! What! . . . well, never mind—some people are! never mind what! And then there's nothing to be done, but another fool must be enticed into the country to shoot my poor bull—as if he ever did anybody any harm! He wasn't a bush-ranger, I suppose."

"But he did do harm, Mr. Crab," said Betsy, with some vivacity, "he bruised poor Mr. Beresford dreadfully, and he would have tossed me, if he had not been shot just in time; and as it was, the dust from his horns, as he plunged them about the ground, flew into my eyes."

"Why didn't you run away then? or you might have slipped aside, and caught hold of him by his tail, and then he couldn't have hurt you; he couldn't have tossed you with his tail, surely!"

"Good gracious, Mr. Crab, do you suppose that I can hold bulls by their tails? A pretty sight, indeed, for your ugly bull to be rampaging about, and me holding on by his tail. I wonder what next!"

"Bless me!" said Crab, "to hear how some people will go on! But I'll go to bed. The quietest!—the gentlest—and the sweetest-tempered beast—when he was not provoked! And why," he concluded, frowning at poor Betsy, and resembling in his ill-humour the angry animal that he lamented,—“why, in the name of all that's reasonable, could the girl think of wearing red

ribands in her bonnet up here in the bush, when a strip of kangaroo-skin or bullock's-hide would have served just as well? And there's that young rascal that shot the bull; yes! he marches about with the red ribands at his breast, as if he wanted to anger all the cattle in the district."

This last remark on the part of my old friend—unintentioned as was the hit—made Betsy blush in a manner that I thought was not caused by Crab's lamentation over his bull.

"Oh! oh!" thought I, "the young fellow has been making the best use of his time while I've been away. We must examine into this matter before it goes too far; young ladies, I see, are precocious in Van Diemen's Land. I shall look out for the red ribands to-morrow." And now to bed.

Chapter Thirtieth.

Surveying a grant of Land—Crab becomes a Landed Proprietor
against the grain—The Bush-ranger's Daughter.

WE were roused up early next morning by a party of the colonial surveyor's men, who came to measure some land in our district ; and we were exceedingly surprised to receive a letter of formidable dimensions, and bearing a prodigious seal, addressed to "Mr. Samuel Crab, River Clyde." As soon as that worthy individual had emerged from his dormitory, I placed the letter in his hands, and being anxious to know what had given rise to a correspondence between him and the Colonial Government, I urged him to break the seal. In the meantime the news of the arrival of this unusual missive had caused all the inmates to hasten from their rooms, and presently the whole family was assembled to witness the ceremony of opening the letter.

I have often regretted there was no artist present to take a sketch of the party assembled on this interesting occasion. It was still early morning ; the shutters had been hastily and partially thrown open, and the grey light streaked through the windows, while the flames of the dry wood, which burnt and crackled on the capacious hearth, diversified the lights and shadows of the rude apartment. The women suspended their usual avocations, and grouped themselves round Crab with

unrestrained curiosity. That interesting personage stood in the midst ; in one hand he held a colonial hat, ingeniously fabricated from the skin of a kangaroo, with the hairy side outwards ; and in the other he upheld the mysterious letter ; peering into it with curious eye, and with an odd expression of countenance, as if he half doubted and half mistrusted the contents of the epistle.

“ ‘ Mister Samuel Crab ! ’ that’s me, sure enough ; but what on earth the Governor can have to say to me is more than I can think. ‘ Mister Samuel Crab ! ’ It must be me ; but what it can be about is a wonder, surely ! ”

“ Suppose you were to open it,” said Betsy, a little pertly ; “ perhaps the inside would tell you.”

“ Open it !—well—do you open it, Miss, as you’re so curious ; but don’t break the seal—why, there must be red-ochre enough in that seal to ruddle a sheep ! Just tear round it gently ; that’s the way ; well, now, what does it say ? ”

“ Good gracious ! Mr. Crab, here’s an order for a grant of land, for YOU ! ”

“ A grant of land for ME ! the thing’s impossible ! What do I want with land when I’m a going to leave the colony, maybe, in another week, only what to do with those sheep worries me—there’s nothing but plagues in this country—it can’t be for me ; there’s some mistake ! ”

“ No mistake at all,” said I ; “ here’s the order plain enough. Four hundred acres of land ! Well, my friend, you have got your wish at last, and now you have land of your own. What will you do with it ? ”

“ Land of my own !—do with it ?—why, what should

I do with it? What's the use of land to me when I'm going to leave the colony directly? And where could I find four hundred acres of land worth looking at? There's scarcely an acre of good land in the colony: that's a fact—unless it's so covered with trees that you can't squeeze your way through 'em."

As my excellent friend thus expressed himself, I fancied I observed in his manner a confusion and embarrassment, coupled with a secret inclination to possess himself of the land, that I could not but suspect indicated some fore-knowledge of this grant, which he was pleased to regard as totally unsuspected.

"You were down in Camp," said I, "about two months ago, Crab, were you not?"

"To be sure I was."

"And did you not see somebody in particular there?"

"I saw nobody but a pack of knavish store-keepers, who would cheat a man of the eyes out of his head, if he'd let 'em. I was talking to one of those chaps on the jetty, where I went to see if there were any ships sailing for England—he's one that I deal with for the slops and things that I want for my stock-keepers, which he cheats me in, of course—and he said if I applied to the Governor, he had no doubt that I might get a small grant of land, as I had a couple of thousand sheep, and the Government, he said, liked to encourage industrious farming men, that are really farmers, and not cockney creters that don't know at which end of a sheep to begin a-shearing at."

"And so you asked the Governor?"

"Not I! But the store-keeper chap wrote a letter to the Governor, asking a grant of land, and I signed it, for

a joke-like, for I never expected anything would come of it; and a pretty passion the Governor will be in, I dare say, when he comes to know that I asked for a grant of land, and all the while was a-looking out for a ship to leave the colony!"

"But you have been going to leave the colony every day for the last seven years, and you have not gone yet. Perhaps you may stay seven years more, and then the land will be of use to you. Besides, at your years——"

"At my years! Well, to be sure!—and what's my years? I'm only sixty-eight; and I haven't had a day's illness once the whole seven years, except the time of the christening that you all drunk so much rum punch, when the climate had such an effect on me, and gave me a dizziness in the head—it's so changeable!"

"Exactly," said I; "the changeableness of the climate has certainly a peculiar effect on some people, and on occasions of christening it is apt to produce dizziness and other disorders; but that has nothing to do about your land. I know of a prime little bit, with a capital run for a small flock, not more than half a dozen miles from here."

"Ah! Cherry-Tree Bottom. That's a niceish bit; I remember the letter said something about Cherry-Tree Bottom; the deuce of a bit of a cherry will you find there though; but there's no water carriage."

"Water-carriage! You don't want water-carriage for sheep; they can carry themselves with their tails behind them, can't they?"

"Well—I can't say but that lot of land at Cherry-Tree Bottom is a fairish piece for this country. But it's only wasting it to give it to me, as I shan't be in the country long enough to make use of it."

"But you won't do any harm to it, I suppose; you can't take it away with you when you go."

"No, surely not; that's very true. Well—it is a niceish bit. Do you know I've a notion you might grow hops in that bottom. I put the spade in it one day, and, my eyes! if it isn't all loam as far as you can dig, as black as your hat, for I don't know how deep!"

"I see," said I, "that you have an inkling for it; so we had better have it measured at once, as the surveyors are in the district."

"Well, well, do as you like. Measure away; but if you think I'd stay in this country for all the land that's in it, you are much mistaken; that's all I can say about it."

"Why, you can sell it, if you don't like it," said I, "and I'll buy it of you."

"Will you, though?" said Crab. "Well, that's very friendly of you, I must say; but it's worth nothing."

"It's worth a dollar an acre, at any rate; but whatever it may be worth, I'll engage to buy it of you. I think it's worth two hundred pounds down, as it is."

"But what's the use of that? I can't sell it till I've had it three years, and used it as a farm. I declare," he continued, looking through the window, "there's that young fellow coming that killed my bull, and he wants it, I know; but he shan't have it, I'll be hang'd if he shall. I'm first, and I've the first right to it, and I'll have it, or I'll know the reason why."

And so it was settled; the pleasure of preventing young Beresford from having this particular bit of land having more weight with Crab than all the arguments we could make use of; so strong was his anger against

the slayer of his pet bull. I shall have to show, however, hereafter, how Crab was disappointed in his vindictive determination.

The assistant-surveyor was polite, and his men were ready, so after breakfast we set off to Cherry-Tree Bottom, taking two of my men with axes to mark the trees.

"Now," said Crab, when we arrived at the spot, "I'll have this bit just here, do you see; beginning at this gum-tree, and going over the point of that little rise just across the rivulet yonder."

"I'll soon see," said the surveyor, "how the lines run, and you can begin where you like."

"How the lines run!" said Crab: "what's that to me? The lines may run which way they like; but I want this bit of land, and this is the bit I'll have measured."

"Your side-lines," replied the surveyor, "must be drawn according to the colonial regulations, parallel with the rest, or there would be nothing but a confusion of blocks and angles. Now for it; that is the direction of your side-line; where shall I begin?"

"You shall never begin for me," said Crab, very angrily, "if I can't have the bottom. It's all scrub, except just here."

"Let us see," said I, "if we can't manage it. Suppose you begin at this mimosa-tree to the left; then your base-line would extend to that little green hill, and so you would take in all the best part of the rivulet, and the whole of the bottom."

"Well, measure away," said Crab; "it doesn't matter; I shan't be here long to be worried with your side-lines and your angles, as you call 'em—though there's

not much angling to be had in that puddle, I'm thinking—measure away, and let's have done with it, and not lose such a day as this for ploughing."

The surveyor adjusted his instrument accordingly, and his two men going before with their chain, we followed after, marking the trees as we went along, by slicing off a piece of the bark, front and back, on each side of the trees that formed the boundary line. The survey was soon concluded, and then Mr. Crab, regarding his landed possessions with a condescending eye—

"I say, Mister," said he to the surveyor, "don't you tell the Governor that I'm going home again, by the very next ship, may-be; let that come of itself; no need to anger people before the time; and governors, of all others, don't like to be made fools of."

"Never fear," said the good-natured surveyor; "I'll keep your secret, you may depend. I dare say I shall find you on your farm seven years hence."

"If you do," said Crab, "you shall eat me."

"Eat you!" said the surveyor, making an impromptu survey of Crab's extraordinary person and habiliments; "my dear sir, make yourself perfectly easy; I am quite satisfied with the survey without wishing to appropriate you in so exclusive a manner to myself; and now I must bid you good-day, and go to work in another direction."

With that he quitted us, and we returned homewards, where I found my friend, the magistrate, who communicated to me some information about the little girl, the child of the bush-ranger, whose wretched fate I have recorded, which determined me to lose no time in going to Hobart Town to make inquiries, and to take measures

for establishing, beyond the possibility of future question, the identity of my new charge. It will be seen that my interference was just in time to save her from a deeply-laid plot to steal her away from the island. The curious story of the Gypsy's daughter, I am inclined to think, will be considered not one of the least interesting parts of the memoirs of my busy life.

Chapter Thirty-first.

Crab's contradictions—French Fashions penetrate into the Interior of Van Diemen's Land—A Parson wanted—Smoking a Ship—A Plot discovered—A Disguise, and a new Adventure.

IT was on a fine winter morning, in the month of July, that I put the saddle on my horse for a ride to Hobart Town, to inquire for the bush-ranger's daughter. Some snow had fallen in the night, and it lay on the ground about an inch thick, presenting an appearance of striking contrast with the evergreen foliage of the native trees and shrubs. The air was sharp, but bracing and pleasant, and of that exhilarating pureness and freshness which I have sometimes fancied peculiar to this island. Crab stood by with his hand on the holster: he was thoughtful that morning. His new dignity as a landed proprietor sat uneasily upon him, and it was plain that an inward struggle was going on between the temptation to make use of his land, and the embarrassment of his habitual vituperation of the colony.

"I suppose," said he, "I must build some sort of a hut on the land, to show that it's mine—not that it matters whether it's mine or anybody else's for the short time that I shall stay here. But I must get some money to pay for the things, if there's a dollar to be had in the colony, which I don't believe. Do you carry your pistols loaded?" lifting up the cover of one of the holsters,

and exposing to view the brass butt-end of one of the large horse-pistols which formed my usual companions in my journeys to town.

"Best to be prepared, Crab," said I; "I carry them for use, not for show; and what's the use of an empty barrel in a hurry?"

"Very true. It's dreadful to think of the horrid condition of this place, where a man can't step outside his own door without pistols and blunderbusses! But I must try to get to the other side of the country, and sell a matter of a couple o' hundred sheep or so, that I may have money to make things tidy a bit at the bottom yonder. It's too late to put in any cuttings, but I think we may make a good garden there, and in two or three years I may gather an apple from my own tree, on my own land—that is, some body else may, because, of course, I shall not be here: and we may have some real cherries, not those outlandish things, like a hawthorn berry squashed, with the stone growing outside! I'm determined to see if hops won't grow there, and grow they shall, or I'll know the reason why! And only to think of making my own beer with hops grown on my own land. It would be a charity to teach the folks here how to do it!"

I admired the contradictory emotions which I saw perplexed my old friend, and I took care not to check his aspirations after a farm of his own. I encouraged him, therefore, to go over to his sheep-runs and dispose of some stock to meet his necessary outlays. I shall have to describe in another place the amusing occurrences of Crab's journey to Launceston, so I shall say no more of them at present.

I was gathering up the reins to start, when I was stopped by my wife, who put into my hands a list of various articles wanted by the family. As I glanced my eye over the items, I read—"bonnet for Betsy," "bonnet for Mary," "bonnet for Lucy." Three bonnets! Stuff for summer dresses, gloves, kid shoes. "Why, my dear," said I, "we shall be ruined this way; why can't the girls wear kangaroo-skin bonnets, as they used to do when we first came here? This is a new state of things entirely."

"To be sure it is, my dear. When we first came here, there was nobody in the wild bush but ourselves, but now we have settlers all round us, and I don't like the girls to go about such figures! Besides, I want a bonnet myself, and I see by the *Hobart Town Gazette*, that a consignment has come from Madame Somebody, at Paris; so you had better buy all we want while you are in town."

"The deuce take the newspapers," said I, "for putting things into people's heads that otherwise they wouldn't think about. The idea of French fashions up the country in Van Diemen's Land! I suppose the girls will be wanting parasols next, to preserve their complexions."

"I am glad you have mentioned it, my dear; I knew there was something that I had forgotten, and it's the parasols. You can get four, and then we shall have one apiece."

"Upon my word," said I, "I can't stand this. Parasols in the bush! Why, the kangaroos would laugh at us!"

"The kangaroos may laugh as much as they please, my dear, but I don't like to see the girls get so freckled.

You forget that Betsy is a young woman now, and it's right that she should take a proper pride in herself."

"I see," said I, "how it is. That affair of the bull is at the bottom of all the mischief. Well—time moves on. Nothing else wanted, I hope?"

"We want another chest of tea; the last one is nearly out; but this time I wish you would buy a little green to mix with the black; and you see I have put down a couple of bags of sugar, and a bag of rice."

"I see," said I, "and now I'm off, or I shall be late in town."

"Wait a moment," cried young Beresford, out of breath; "I have a little commission for you. I wish you would do me a favour."

"With pleasure," said I, "what is it?"

"I don't suppose it would give you much trouble, or I would not ask you."

"Never mind the trouble. What is it? I'll do it if I can."

"Why—you see, I can't go to town myself just at this moment, and writing will not do ——"

"But what is it that writing will not do?"

"I don't want you to do anything—exactly, but it's just to make some inquiries."

"Inquiries about what?"

"Oh, it's not about anybody; but you see——don't you think, Mr. Thornley, it's a great inconvenience not to have a resident clergyman at the Clyde?"

"What! are you going to turn parson?"

"Me! nonsense! that's not it; you don't understand what I mean."

"How can I, if you don't tell me? what is it that has kindled this sudden religious zeal in you, pray?"

"It's not religious zeal, as you call it. Upon my word, it's very provoking that you can't understand me. You remember when poor Moss was carried off by the bush-rangers! In short, Miss Moss . . ."

"Oh!" said I.

"Well, now you understand my meaning perfectly."

"But you have not told it."

"Haven't I? why I have been telling you all the time. But we can't be married without the parson; we can manage all the rest ourselves. Now, just do me the favour to find out what we must do. We must go to town, I suppose, because Miss Moss wishes to be married in the church. So if you can contrive to see the Reverend, I want you to say that we propose being in town on the twenty-fourth of this month—the twenty-fourth, mind—don't forget the day—and that's all."

"And enough too," said I. "Are you aware, unhappy man (I had just looked round and saw that my wife was out of hearing), of the rash step you are about to take? It's only the other day that the parson had to attend a very respectable gentleman on his last appearance for killing one of his wives—although he had tried three before; you see how difficult it is to find one to suit!—and now it seems it is your turn to require his professional assistance, though not precisely in the same way. Well, if it must be so, I suppose I must consent to be an accessory before the fact, although why I should help you to marry I'm sure I don't know, for you never did me any harm. And now I'm off."

I rode leisurely on to town, stopping for about two hours at the Green Ponds. As soon as I had seen my horse properly taken care of, I set about the principal

object of my journey, and walked to the part of the town where the person who had charge of the bush-ranger's orphan resided. I tapped at the door, and was surprised not to receive any answer. I tried the latch, and found that the door opened easily; there was no particular appearance about the house, so far as I could observe, but it was empty; and I thought it odd that it should be left unsecured.

As I stood before the door musing on what I should do, and expecting every moment that some one would appear to give me information of the inmates, I cast my eyes towards the Derwent—for as the house before which I was standing was at the upper part of the town on the eminence to the north, I had a fine view of the river and the harbour. I thought I observed an unusual bustle on the jetty, and I descried a corporal's party of soldiers stepping into a boat, whose destination seemed to be a vessel about a quarter of a mile from the end of the jetty, with her sails unfurled ready to start outward bound.

As no one came, I conjectured that the occupants of the house, which stood at some little distance apart from any other dwelling, had gone out for some purpose, so I closed the door, and prompted by that curiosity which is apt to seize on us when we have nothing particular to do, I walked down to the jetty, where I observed a number of persons congregated, and apparently excited by some object of interest. The boat with the soldiers had already pushed away from the shore, and was on its way to the ship.

I quickly reached the spot, and found myself in the midst of a crowd of the miscellaneous character usual

on such occasions in Van Diemen's Land. The principal part was composed of prisoners, those in government employ being distinguished by their yellow jackets, and the others bearing that peculiar physiognomy which characterises those in the bondage of punishment—a sort of cast-down expression of countenances, averting themselves shrinkingly from the eye of any observer that is cast inquiringly upon them. The remarks which I heard around me soon made me acquainted with what was going on.

“Have they found him?” said one.

“No: found him! don't you see the soldiers are going after him now?”

“They'll never find him,” said another.

The constables rummaged every hole in the ship that a rat could get into, and they could find nothing.

“They say they're going to smoke the ship.”

“That will puzzle him; there's nothing like smoking a ship to unkennel a runaway.”

“Who has run away?” inquired another. “Some chap tired of his lag?”

“It's Black Jack,” said a roguish-looking fellow in a yellow jacket; “they say he's got stowed away in a cask, and that some of the crew have helped him.”

“Jack had plenty of money,” said the first speaker; “but where he got it from always puzzled me.”

“It puzzled more than you,” said the yellow jacket; “Jack seemed to be always a scheming after something, but we never could make out what.”

“Was he a government man?” inquired a farming-looking person in a velveteen coat, and a straw in his mouth.

"Yes, a lifer; but he got a ticket of leave nobody knows how; it wasn't for his beauty, at any rate. But money can do anything. They say he was an attorney's clerk before he came here—the one that did the swearing part of the office business, serving the notices and making any davys that were wanted—I do believe that fellow could swear through a two-inch board. But it's all up with him now if they find him."

"What will they do with him, if they catch him?" asked the farmer.

"Scrag him," replied the yellow jacket; "don't you know it's a job for the sheriff if a prisoner tries to escape?"

"They wouldn't hang him," observed a decent-looking man who had listened to this colloquy; "they would only send him to Macquarie Harbour."

"Only!" exclaimed the yellow jacket. "Do you call Macquarie Harbour nothing? I'd rather give a jump and a kick from the parson's hustings any day, than go to that cursed place; they kill 'em there by inches. There go up the soldiers; see they are ranging themselves in line across the deck; we shall have some fun, I suppose, presently."

I got interested about this attempted escape, though I knew nothing about the man whom I had heard called "Black Jack," and I made my way through the crowd to the edge of the jetty, where I saw one or two persons with whom I was acquainted. We watched the vessel for about a quarter of an hour, when we observed some smoke to issue from the fore part of her, and presently afterwards a signal was hoisted on board, which was answered from the shore. Some little bustle now took

place on deck, and a small party of soldiers which had been marched down to the jetty, advanced to the edge of the water, to keep clear a space for the expected landing. In a minute or two some person huddled up was lowered into a boat alongside, which was rapidly rowed towards the shore.

"There's Black Jack!" exclaimed a voice, which I immediately recognised as that of the yellow jacket; "they've smoked him out of his hole, and now they've got him, and he's booked, and no mistake!"

With that he edged himself closer to the spot to which the boat was approaching, as if impelled by a sort of restless curiosity.

"Keep back!" said the sergeant who commanded the party of soldiers at the landing; "what are you pushing in here for? there's plenty of room on the jetty without crowding on us."

"I ain't a-crowding," said the yellow jacket; "only I want to see how a fellow looks after he's been smoked. He looks precious down in the mouth; he's Black Jack now, if he never was before."

Two constables now took charge of the poor wretch, holding him up by his arms; he seemed to be in the last stage of exhaustion, and so helpless was his appearance that they forebore to handcuff him. As he tottered on he passed the spot where the man in the yellow jacket was standing; I fancied he gave him a look, and immediately afterwards he staggered and fell from the arms of the constables. The yellow jacket officiously stepped forward, and caught hold of his hand to assist him in rising, and I again observed Black Jack give to this man a peculiar look. I was struck with this

circumstance, and it immediately occurred to me that the captured man was acting a part, and that the other was a confederate in some plot understood between them.

My curiosity was roused, and I kept my eyes on the yellow jacket, who I observed took no further notice of the prisoner, but seemed solicitous to make his way out of the throng as quickly as possible. I don't know what feeling prompted me, other than a vague idea, that there was some confederacy between them—and anything like a plot among the convicts was sufficient to excite suspicion—but I felt a strange inclination to watch the man. He contrived to make his way quietly and rapidly through the crowd, but I followed him closely. Without turning his head, and affecting a careless manner, he hastened towards the upper part of the town. He stopped when he had turned the corner of the street, and looked at something in his hand, which he read attentively. He was about to move forward again hastily, when he caught sight of me, and seemed surprised and confused to see me near him. He hesitated for a moment, and then, as if he had made up his mind to abandon his present intention, he retraced his steps, and taking off his hat as he passed me, he went away in another direction.

I mused for a minute or two on this occurrence, and regretted that I had not questioned the man. I looked after him, but he was out of sight.

The afternoon was now drawing to a close, and I thought that before I went to my inn, I would make another visit to the house in which I was led to believe the bush-ranger's little girl resided. I walked up the hill accordingly, and knocked at the door of the house

with my stick : there was no answer. I opened the door and found the house still untenanted, and apparently no one had visited it since I was there before. I thought this odd ; and being tired with my ride to town and walking about, I sat down by the window.

As I looked down the road in the opposite direction to that from which I had reached the house, I saw at a little distance the man in the yellow jacket, who seemed to be making his way to the same spot. This unexpected re-appearance of the man roused me, and vague surmises crossed my mind, that he was in some way connected with the persons whom I had come to seek. There was no one in the street but himself, and I observed that, after giving a careless look around him as if to be sure that he was not watched, he came straight to the house. He laid his hand on the latch, but checked himself ; and I heard him slowly walking round the building.

It instantly struck me that his object was to ascertain whether there was any one behind it or near it, and I determined to counteract his project.

There was a window at the back with the shutter closed, the house consisting only of one room and a kitchen at the side. It was getting dusk, and I thought that if I could open the door so as not to be heard, I could go round one side of the house while he was going round the other, and so avoid being seen by him. I opened the door cautiously ; it made no noise, and I moved silently to the left, and looked round the corner. There was no one to be seen, and I immediately stepped to the left side of the house ; in a few seconds I heard the man lift up the latch, and enter the house.

Without losing a moment, I stationed myself at the back of the house by the window, and waited for what might happen. I remained in this position for nearly half an hour, and was getting tired of waiting, being at a loss what to do next, when I heard in the direction of the bush—for this house was the last one on the outside of the town—the pleasing note of the native magpie, which seemed to me, however, to be an imitation, though a very good one. I guessed that it was some signal. As I was between the house and the bush, I moved away to the side, and it was just in time, perhaps, to avoid being discovered, for I had scarcely done so, when a light was shown at the window at the back of the house, upon which the signal was immediately repeated.

It was now nearly dark, and I remained stuck up against the wall, my curiosity being now excited more than ever, for I felt convinced that the present proceedings had some reference to the absence of the child whom I had come to town to see. In a minute or two I heard the footsteps of some one cautiously approaching, and I was terribly frightened lest I should be discovered in my hiding place.

Luckily for my project, the party who approached, from an excess of precaution, crept in by the back window or opening, for there was no glass to it, only a shutter. Anxious to catch the conversation of these worthies, I crept on my hands and knees round the corner as softly as I could, and ensconced myself under the window through which the man had crept. I could see no light, so I supposed the candle had been put out. The first words that I caught were these:—

"So Black Jack is caught ; it was a clever trick though, to get hooped up in a cask with two false heads, and with water top and bottom."

"Yes," said yellow jacket ; "but the smoke found him out ; he lost his senses in the dark, and began to kick before his time, and so they nabbed him. It's all up with him now."

"Is it a scrag, d'ye think?"

"It's all one ; he's of no more use to us. We must think now of the job ; what's to be done next?"

"I'll be hanged if I know. What's the use of keeping the girl stowed away, now that Jack's done up?"

"Oh, it's not Jack's work," said yellow jacket ; "he's only second fiddle ; there's a swell at the bottom of it, and he don't spare money, as you know."

"But what's the game?" said the other ; "one don't like to go blindfold to work in this way. Do they want to put the girl out of the way—that's the long and the short of it?"

"I guess it's something like it," said yellow jacket. "You see she's very much in the way at present, at least so Jack said. There's something about estates in England that she has a right to, but Jack couldn't well make out the whole secret. We were all to be well paid for it, and that's enough for us to know ; we have only to do the trick."

"Then that's not the trick for me," rejoined the other ; "I know I'm book'd for Macquarie Harbour, if I'm caught, let alone this job ; but the Gypsy was a good friend to the prisoners, and he died game ; and I'll have no hand in harming his child. As to keeping her close for a while, that's nothing ; but I want to know what

they're at? And why was it that Black Jack tried to escape just at this time, when he's wanted?"

"That's more than I can tell," said yellow jacket; "but I've got a scrap of paper from him."

"Ha! how was that? What does he say?"

"Here's the paper; but it doesn't tell much."

"Get a light, and let us look at it."

I now redoubled my attention, and I became aware by the light that gleamed through the cracks of the shutter that the letter was being perused.

"Well," said yellow jacket, "what do you think of it?"

"It doesn't say much:—

"'If I am taken, carry this letter to the red-house in Emu-street, and the bearer will receive a handsome reward.'"

"I suppose," said yellow jacket, "that you will not attempt to take it?"

"No, not I; the town is too hot for me; you must do it; and as to the reward, I suppose I must trust to you for my share of it."

"Never fear, that will be all right: but I must be going now; I must show myself by seven o'clock."

"Then I'll be off, too; when shall we meet again?"

"Be here to-morrow, at the same time, and make the same signal."

"I will."

The window-shutter was now opened, and I slipped round the corner, and lay hid at the side of the house. The stranger, without waiting to look behind him, and indeed it was too dark for him to see much, hastily retreated in the direction of the bush. As soon as he

was at some distance, I resumed my position under the shutter, and I observed by the light that it was not quite closed. Prompted by a powerful curiosity, I cautiously raised myself up, and peeped through the opening between the shutter and the wall. I saw the man in the yellow jacket lifting up a stone in the floor, under which he deposited a letter, which I guessed was the same to which allusion was made in their conversation. Having done this, and trodden down the stone so as to efface any appearance of its having been disturbed, he quitted the house to the right, and returned into the town.

After waiting a short time to guard against being surprised by his sudden return, I entered the house. It was dark, but I had noted the spot, and I easily found the stone, and raised it with my fingers. I seized the letter with no small satisfaction, and taking the left hand road, I deliberated with myself on my way into the town what step I should take next. I resolved to lose no time in communicating the circumstance to the proper authorities; but first I thought I would try the effect of the letter on the mysterious inhabitant of the red-house, before he could be put on his guard. I examined the letter; it had no address, and it was closed with a wafer, and also sealed with wax, with the initials rudely engraved of I. S.

I deliberated with myself as I walked along, whether I should open the letter, and get at the information it contained; but I considered that it was probably so worded as to be intelligible only to the party to whom it was addressed, and that the breaking of the seal might awaken alarm, and prevent me from arriving at the know-

ledge of facts which might be communicated to me as a supposed party in the confederacy. With that view I thought it best to deliver the letter unopened, and act according to circumstances, for if it came to the worst, I thought that I could seize on the letter before I left the house, and so get at its contents.

I repaired, therefore, to a friend's house, and told him that I was engaged in an affair which required disguise. My friend could not avoid exhibiting considerable surprise at this request, but he was too polite to give expression to his thoughts, further than to hum in a subdued tone the well-known air of "Mr. Lobski." I let him have his joke, for I was too intent on my project to mind his chaffing, and he soon furnished me with a sailor's dress, which, with a very small, and very round hat, having an abominable fishy smell, changed my appearance from a respectable, middle-aged settler, to that of a sort of fresh water sailor.

My friend strongly recommended me to wash my hands in a tar-bucket, to give a better resemblance to the character, and hinted that a slight application of the same substance to my face and whiskers would assist in the personation of my new character. I declined these kind suggestions, but I thought it advisable to acquiesce in a huge quid, which he thrust into my mouth, in order, as he said, "to inspire me with some seafaring lingo," and I was not aware of the malice of this latter suggestion until I found myself getting sick with the nastiness of the "knock-me-down" tobacco.

Fortified by this disguise, I hastened to the red-house, which I found to be of tolerable dimensions, and furnished with the aristocratic appendages of a

bell and knocker. Not wishing to appear presuming, I left the knocker alone, and applied myself to the bell, at which I gave a vigorous and sailor-like pull, and waited with no small anxiety for an answer to my summons.

Chapter Thirty-second.

First Appearance in a new Character—The Disguise discovered—
The Struggle—Three to One too much—An Apartment for a
Single Gentleman.

IT was about nine o'clock, and the night was very cold. Some light fleecy flakes had begun to fall, just sufficient to spread a thin white carpet over the ground, and from the dense clouds which hid Mount Wellington from the sight, I anticipated a heavy fall of snow.

As I stood with my hands in my pockets, and the abominable quid in my mouth, assuming as well as I could the air of a sailor, and balancing myself as I have observed sailors do on land, as if they missed the motion, with my legs stretched out apart, and my toes turned in, I could not help admiring at the odd variety of adventures in which I had been engaged, very unlike the dull plodding life of an old Surrey farmer; and now I found myself embarked in an affair about a little girl whom I had never seen, which seemed likely, to judge from the beginning, to turn out an awkward business to interfere in.

All these thoughts passed through my mind while I was waiting for the door to be opened; and I wondered then, as I have often wondered since, on the number of by-gone scenes which can be conjured up by the imagination in a very short time, the events of a lifetime being re-acted as it were in a moment. But this contem-

plation is too deep for a plain man like me, who has not had the advantage of book-learning in my early years, though I sometimes think that the experience of actual life is worth more than all the book-learning in the world—so I leave this inquiry to the philosophers to explain if they can.

One thought, however, came suddenly on me like a puzzle, and it gave me a shock like striking one's plough against an old stump of a tree that you didn't expect, and that was, that I had neglected to ascertain the name of the occupier of the red-house, and that I should look very foolish if I should be asked who I wanted to see. But it was too late to deliberate, for I heard the lock shot back, and the door opening, a woman, who from the glimpse I caught of her face by a light in the passage, seemed very old and very ugly, put to me the very inconvenient question that I apprehended.

"Who are you wanting to see, pray?"

I shall be in a mess here, thought I, if I don't mind; so taking a hint from the advice that I heard a lawyer give one day, that "when you can't reply to a question, answer it by asking another," I said whisperingly, "Is he at home?"

"Is who at home?" said the perverse old woman.

"Who?" said I; "Why him; don't you know?" Here I tried to recollect some seafaring phrase, but for the life of me I could think of nothing but "shiver my timbers;" and that observation somehow didn't seem appropriate to the occasion. So I contented myself by replying, "I've got a letter for him."

"A letter! Eh! give it to me."

"Beg pardon," said I: "avast there! that's what I

can't do by no manner of means (I flattered myself that this style was the real thing); I was told to give it into the gentleman's own hands, that is, if he's got any; so I clapped my helm hard a-starboard (what this meant I didn't exactly know, but I was obliged to chance it), and here I am come into port."

I saw that the old lady was considerably struck by my display of nautical phraseology; so to follow up the favourable impression, and to keep up my character, I gave the quid—which during this brief colloquy I had stuck scientifically into my cheek, producing thereby I trusted a forecastle cast of countenance—a determined squeeze with my teeth, which almost made me vomit; and committing an Americanism with a knowing sort of air, I gave a professional hitch to my trousers, and waited for a reply.

"You nasty beast," said the old woman, in a shrill tone, and retreating down the passage; "how dare you foul people's houses with your filthy tobacco juice; do you think I've nothing to do but to clean after filthy sea-sailor men, you dirty-seaweed?"

"What's the matter?" said a voice from the parlour door, which was now opened; "what's all this noise about at this time of night?"

"Noise! here's a nasty sailor spitting into people's houses, and he says he's got a letter for you."

"Yes, sir," said I; "I've got a letter for you—that is, if you're the gentleman it's meant for; and if you are, of course you know it's right for me to be cautious who I give it to."

"Shut the door," said he, quickly, to the old woman; "lock it; draw the bolts. There, now (to me), come in, come in."

I found myself in a small decently-furnished room, with nothing particular in its appearance. There was another door opposite to that by which I had entered, but it did not strike me as being unusual or suspicious.

"Now," said my host, in a rough way, "where's the letter?"

I glanced at him to see what sort of a looking person he was, and I must say that his appearance was not at all in his favour. He was about forty years of age, dressed in a rusty black coat and waistcoat, with a red handkerchief round his neck; I noted that he had on drab-coloured trousers, with black gaiters; altogether his dress struck me as if it was a disguise, for there was something incongruous between a certain air that he had and the clothes that he wore; they seemed to sit on him as if he was not used to them. I fancied also that the roughness of his manner was assumed, and I remarked that the hand which he held forward to receive the letter he expected from me was white and delicate. His countenance was not the countenance of an ordinary man, and it reminded me obscurely of some face that I had seen before, but I could not bring to my recollection where or when; I should have thought it rather handsome than otherwise, if it had not been for a peculiar expression which I can describe no better than by saying it gave one the idea that he was always plotting something, and was fearful of detection. He repeated his demand sharply:—

"Give me the letter."

"Excuse me, sir," said I, "if I appear disrespectful," but I should like to be sure that you are the gentleman for whom the letter is intended. Perhaps you would

tell me your name (he looked at me searchingly), to see," I added boldly, "if it corresponds with the name on the letter."

He turned his eye to the door on the other side of the room, and seemed to be considering for a second or two, whether he should do something that he had a mind to; but he altered his intention, and turning to me:—

"Well," said he, "my name—to be sure, why shouldn't I tell you my name? You know my name, of course?"

"You may guess," said I, "that I shouldn't have been trusted with this letter if I wasn't in the secret. But the risk is too great," I added, "as you know," looking hard at him, "for any one of us to trifle with the consequences. Before I give up the letter," said I, in a determined way, "I must be sure that you are the right person."

"And pray," said he, "what is yours?"

Here was a puzzler! I was all of a sudden, as the sailors say, "taken aback," and I almost lost my presence of mind; at the moment I did not know what name to take, but as I was obliged to give some one without delay, for I felt that any hesitation on that point would excite suspicion, I gave my right one.

"William Thornley."

"Is that a purser's name, or the true one?"

"The true one," said I; "and I give it you at once, to show that as we are all bound up together, the best way is to trust one another."

"Indeed!" said he; "and so it's come to this; but we—yes, we are all alike now, I suppose. We—we must all trust one another! Come, we can't be all night

about this matter. I am known by the name of John Wolsey; will that do for you?"

"Thought I to myself, it must, for I can't make anything more of it." I gave him the letter.

He looked at the place where he expected to find the address, but there was none.

"How is this," said he, coming a step forward, "there is no name on the letter, and you have made me give you mine?"

"Look at the seal," said I, at a loss to escape from the difficulty.

He held it to the candle.

"That is right," said he, "but there is something about you, my friend, that I do not understand. Sit down while I read the letter."

He opened and read it; and its contents seemed to give him satisfaction, which was presently succeeded by an expression of doubt and anxiety.

"You know the contents of this letter?" said he.

"Of course," said I.

"And the letter says that you are acquainted with the interior of the country."

"Pretty well for that," said I; not knowing what was meant by the question.

"Do you think you could guide me this night to the spot where they have taken her?"

"Easily," said I, at a venture, and my flesh quivered on my bones to learn what would come next, for I guessed I had got hold of the clue to the Gypsy's daughter.

"At the ruined hut, near Seven-mile Beach," said he, musingly. "Can you ride on horseback?"

"I have done nothing else all my life," said I, thrown

off my guard by the suddenness of the question. The moment after I was conscious of my error, but it was too late.

"All your life on horseback!" exclaimed my host. "How is this? Let me look at your hands. Ha—you are no sailor. You have deceived me—there is treachery here. Who, and what are you, man? Speak! I have the means of forcing from you the truth. What is your object? Why do you come here? and from whom did you receive this letter?"

He opened the door behind him as he spoke, and called out. I felt that the decisive moment was come, and that all that remained for me to do was to get possession of the letter, which was lying open on the table. I made a clutch at it, and seized it before this Mr. Wolsey could prevent me, but at the same moment two men appeared in answer to his call. I rushed to the door leading to the passage, and opening it, I gained the street door; but it was dark, and I could not readily find the way of undoing the bolts by which it was fastened. In the meantime the two men grappled with me. I caught hold of the door-chain, and struggled hard, kicking at the door, and shouting with all my might for assistance.

"Knock him on the head," said a voice, which I recognised as that of the host of the red-house. In this extremity I drew out one of the pistols with which I was provided, but before I could use it, I felt a violent blow on my head, given, I fancy, by some elastic instrument, like one of those powerful and destructive weapons called a "life-preserver." I immediately fell down stunned.

When I recovered, I found myself in the dark, I did not know where. I felt an aching pain in my head, and I was very cold and sick. I endeavoured to raise myself up, but in attempting to rise, I struck my head against the brickwork above, which nearly stunned me again. When I recovered myself, I reached about as I lay, and conjectured that I was in a sort of vault or cellar, for I felt nothing but bricks, which were cold and damp, and arched over my head.

I confess I was in great terror, fearing the worst, as I could not doubt that those who had me in their power would not hesitate to take away my life without scruple, if they thought it necessary for their own safety. This dismal thought made me repent having so rashly encountered such an adventure in the night-time, and under circumstances so suspicious.

The buoyancy of my spirits, however, sustained me even in this perilous position, and as soon as I could gather my senses together, I began to cast about me how to escape from my confinement. I thought of my friend who had helped me to my sailor's dress, and who had been so facetious in disguising me, and wondered whether curiosity or any other feeling would prompt him to seek after me if I did not return in reasonable time. But that seemed an unlikely thing to happen, and at any rate he would not learn till the morning, when he might make inquiries after me at my inn, perhaps; and what was to become of me the meanwhile? for I calculated that my swoon could not have lasted more than half an hour at most: so that it wanted five or six hours to morning, and when the morning came, it would bring no daylight to me in my cavern.

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This thought disturbed me sadly, but I did not lose heart. There was a great bump on my head, which pained me a good deal, but there was no blood, and my hands were free. Thought I to myself, "while there is life there is hope." I felt about, and found that I was confined, as I at first conjectured, in a sort of vault or cellar, about four feet high, and as well as I could measure as I crawled about, ten or twelve feet long, and five or six broad. I examined with my hands the bottom, and sides, and top of my prison all over, but I could discover no place of outlet, which surprised me exceedingly. I examined it again with great minuteness, but it seemed to me nothing but rough brickwork, as well as I could make out. I was puzzled at this, for I could not make out how I had got in.

My examination of the vault tired me very much, and I felt myself getting more sick and faint, which I attributed to the closeness of the vault. I was at a loss what to do. I feared that if I remained long in that horrible den I should be suffocated. In this state minutes seemed hours, and I felt myself falling into a sort of phrenzy of excitement.

Strengthened at last by my very despair, I determined to search again, and in passing my hands over the damp brickwork, some of the mortar at a particular place at the top felt softer than elsewhere. The horrible conviction now came over me, that my murderers had bricked up my prison-hole, and that I was buried alive!

Chapter Thirty-third.

Necessity the Mother of Invention—Advantage of a Good Memory—An Anatomical Experiment—Courage and Perseverance overcome all Difficulties—An unexpected Meeting—The Mysterious Letter gives a clue to a hiding-place—Search of the Red-House.

I REMAINED stupified for some time at my helpless condition, and I suffered from pain in my head very much; but as it was too probable that no help would come from without in time to save me, I felt that I must find the resource from within myself. I roused up my faculties, and by dint of thinking and revolving over and over again all possible means of escape, I hit upon something at last. If, I reasoned, the ruffians who had me in their power, have bricked up so recently the opening through which they had thrust me, the mortar must be still unset and soft, and the bricks might, with a little labour on my part, be displaced. With that thought I felt in my pocket for my bush-knife, and in feeling for the knife I found the letter which had led to my disaster.

I felt quite glad at this even in my dismal dungeon, for at any rate I had got the letter safe, though it was of no use to me in the dark, and whether I should ever live to take advantage of it was very doubtful. I put it as carefully by, though, as if it was a matter of personal importance to myself, for I had got interested

about the girl that occasioned me such a mishap, and I believe there was something in the pertinacity of my disposition that supported my courage, for all through life I never began a thing without being determined to go through with it.

I did not like to be baulked or defeated in anything that I undertook, and having gone through great perils before, and having escaped from danger and from death so imminent and seemingly so certain, that I had given myself up for lost, I thought that I might escape again, sore as was the strait in which I was then cast.

Fortunately my big knife was safe in my pocket, and, to my still greater surprise, one of my pistols, with a small flask of powder and some balls. This latter discovery convinced me that my enemies had some potent and pressing reason for concealing me without delay, supposing me dead, perhaps, and that, as their object was not plunder, but merely to secure me out of the way, they had not taken the trouble, or had not had time to search me; and that the bricking up of the vault was done in order to prevent my being discovered. However that might be, the finding of my knife, and especially the pistol, acted as a powerful encouragement to me, as in the case of any attack being made on me in my cavern, or on my getting out, I felt that I had the means of defending myself, for my knife was an effective weapon of itself. Having first ascertained that my pistol was loaded, and that the charge was home, and having felt the priming with my finger, and found it right and dry, I set about the task of delivering myself from my prison.

I could not sit upright, so I was obliged to work on my knees in a very inconvenient position. I easily scraped

away the mortar from between some of the bricks, but I found them so tightly wedged together, that I could not stir them, and to cut an opening with my knife seemed an endless job, for the bricks were as hard as flints.

I laid myself down to consider what I should do, and to rest myself, for the position was so fatiguing that I could not work for more than a minute or two together. My head was very painful, and I felt a suffocating sensation about the temples that almost determined me to make myself bleed somewhere to relieve the pressure of blood on the brain.

I was sorely perplexed what to do, and tried again with my knife on the bricks, but I could make nothing of it; all of a sudden it struck me that as the weight pressed downwards, and as the strength of the arch was in that direction, if I could apply a force upwards, it might raise up the weight of bricks which had not had time to become firmly cemented together by the setting of the mortar. But how to do it was the question? I could not stand upright to give the bricks a push, and I had no strength in my arms while bending on my knees.

As I was thinking with all my might how to manage it, I remembered to have read a story of some mutineers having confined the captain and officers below the deck on board ship, and that by exerting the force of the muscles of their backs all at the same time, with a simultaneous effort, they burst up the hatchway. Whether there was any truth in that story I do not know, but I resolved to try the same experiment. I put myself under the centre of the recent brickwork, and then, straightening my back, I made a powerful effort, and the superstructure gave way. A loosening once made, I soon cleared away sufficient bricks to admit of my exit.

It was quite dark, and I had no idea where I was, but I judged I could not be far from the spot where I had been struck down. I scrambled out of the vault, and stood upright. Feeling about me, I met a wall of brick, roughly plastered, apparently, which was higher than I could reach. I knew I was in some sort of room or storehouse, as, had it been in the open air, I could have seen the sky.

Groping my way cautiously along, and fearing to fall into some pit, I came to the end of the wall, and continuing my way at right angles, I came to a massive door, which was fastened. I soon found the lock, and ascertained that it was a huge lock of coarse manufacture, put on the inside, to secure the door from without. It was too strong for my knife to force, and in the attempt I should only have broken the blade, which I wanted as a weapon, for I did not know what resistance I might meet with; so I felt all over the floor, in the middle of which was the vault from which I had escaped, for some means of forcing the lock.

I found in the furthestmost corner a whole heap of all sorts of things; bits of iron, pieces of wood, and odds and ends of nails, and staves of casks, and old iron hoops, which showed that this strange apartment had been used as a place to east lumber in. I selected from the heap of materials what I thought suited to the purpose, and applying myself to the lock, I soon forced off the hasp, and opened the door. "Now," thought I, "is the moment of danger, and I must be prepared." Holding part of an iron crow-bar in my right hand, and having my pistol handy for use, I peered cautiously through the open door. It opened into the air. I extended my left

hand, and advancing a step or two, I came upon a wall, which I conjectured to be the wall of the red-house. It was pitch dark, but the snow had fallen abundantly, and I could trace by its white mark the line of the opposite building.

The fresh air revived me wonderfully. All was still, and I could discover nothing by the eye or the ear to give me any information. I felt along the side of the house, and found a door opposite the one which I had forced open. I listened, but I could hear nothing. Being desirous of avoiding the house, I felt all round about, but could discover no other means of exit but that door.

I did not like the venture, so I went back into my old lumber-room, and sat down on the arch of the vault to consider what I had best do. I had no great fear of being surprised, or of being easily overcome where I was, being armed, and having the advantage of position to resist my attack.

Besides, I calculated that if I fired off my pistol, it would most likely give an alarm, and bring assistance to me, though I did not depend much on that, for I might be murdered by numbers before help could reach me, and the detection and hanging of the rascals after my death, although it would be a great satisfaction to justice, would be no satisfaction to me. Under these circumstances I thought it would be best to remain quiet and leave well alone, and wait for daylight, for let the night be ever so long, the morning must come at last.

It seemed longer in coming that night than ever it was before, and I never suffered so much from cold and anxiety as on that wretched night; but the cold was the worst, for as there was not space enough to allow me to

walk about to keep myself warm, I was obliged to sit still and bear it. I had a mind once or twice to creep into my vault again for warmth's sake, but the idea of it revolted me; I was too glad to be out to get in again voluntarily.

In this way I passed the night, longing for the morning; I looked out of my door now and then to listen. The night was bright, and the frost crisped the snow, which lay thickish and sparkling on the narrow ledge of ground between my fortress and the red-house. I looked up at the stars, and tried to make out how long it would be till morning; but I was not astronomer enough to tell the time of the night from the small space that I could see from my confined yard; had I been able to see more of the heavens I could have told pretty well.

At last I fell into a sort of dose in my lumber-house, and waking up in a fright at catching myself asleep, and exposed to be surprised at a disadvantage, I observed to my great joy that I could distinguish the objects about me, and that the long-desired daylight was come. I can scarcely describe the pain that I suffered from the cold at this time of daybreak; it was so intense and so excessively painful as to amount almost to agony: it was the cold I dare say that waked me up.

It was not the first time that I had felt the biting sharpness of the cold of the early morning in Van Diemen's Land, but I never felt it before in a degree so painful. I banged myself about, and stamped with my feet, but it was as much as I could do to recover myself sufficiently to be ready for action.

When I felt myself a little restored, I looked about me to see how things stood. I found that the vault into

where I had been thrust was, as I thought, in the dark, situated in the middle of the storehouse or lumber-room, to which there was no window or other outlet except the large door. What the vault was originally intended for I could not guess, and did not trouble myself with resolving, as I had a more pressing matter to think about. The wall of this building ran flush with the wall of the house, and was bounded on each end by a short wall about twelve feet high. There was no window at the back of the house; nothing but the door which I had felt in the dark, and which, on a cautious examination, I found secured on the inside.

I did not like to attempt the forcing of that door, for I feared being overpowered by numbers, before assistance could reach me, so I cast about to get out of the yard by some means or other. The wall was too high to scale, but I fancied if I could steady the door of my lumber-room, which opened outside, I could get on to the top of the building and drop down into the street on the other side.

The light increased apace, and there was soon sufficient to enable me to distinguish the heap of odds and ends in the corner. I took some of the staves of old casks, and pieces of wood lying there, and silently jamming them between the two buildings and the door, I contrived to steady it between them.

It was no easy matter for me to get on the top of the door, particularly as I was fearful of making a noise, for it was more than six feet high, and I was weak with my night's watching, and from the blow on my head, and my limbs were benumbed with the cold; but by the aid of the great lock, which formed a convenient resting-place

for the foot, I got on the edge of the door, and mounted on the roof of the store-room, which was formed of strong planks, with an inclination inwards. It was very slippery, from the snow which lay on it nearly three inches thick.

I stood on the wall and prepared to drop down from it into the open space, beyond which was the bush, the ground being all covered with snow. As I had need of both hands to assist me in holding on by the wall, I laid my bit of crow-bar on the roof; but the weight of the iron caused it to roll over the smooth boards through the snow, and to fall heavily on my apparatus for steadying the door, on which it descended with a crash sufficient to be heard by the inmates within the house.

This accident made me hasten my movements, but as my hands were cold and the boards were slippery, I could not immediately get into a position preparatory to my drop, and I was on my hands and knees when the door of the red-house opened, and the man in the yellow jacket, whom I had observed on the jetty, and whose conversation I had overheard the evening before, appeared at the entrance. He made a movement as if to come after me, but I pulled out my pistol, and presented it at him. He seemed scared at the sight of the pistol or of me, I don't know which, for he hastily disappeared and shut the door.

In a few seconds after I dropped from the wall, and although I had a tumble, I got up unhurt, and instantly ran off into the heart of the town. I made my way straight to the inn, meeting no one on the road, and rang the bell lustily. The waiter was soon roused up, for I kept up a peal without stopping, and glad enough was I when I found myself safe inside.

"What's o'clock?" was my first inquiry.

"Just five, sir; we wondered you didn't come home last night. The magistrate from the Clyde has been asking for you. He came in about ten last night, and was very anxious to see you. He sat up for you a long time, and couldn't make out why it was you did not sleep here last night."

"Show me to his room directly," said I, "and don't talk of my having been out; make a fire as quick as you can, and get a cup of hot tea, and something to eat. I have business that will take me out again directly."

In another minute I was in my friend's room.

"Why, what on earth," said he, "has been the matter? You look perished; what have you been doing all night?"

I told him in a few words what had happened to me.

"And where," said he, "is this mysterious letter?"

"Here it is; I have not yet read it; do you read it for me; I can hardly see out of my eyes."

He took the letter, and read the following:—

"It's all done. The gal is hid in Jim Burk's hut at Seven-mile Beach. The schooner may easily take her off near there, but there's no time to be lost, for there's no trusting one another in this country. Mike can show you to the place. Yours, J. S."

"It doesn't say much, but it says enough for our present purpose. Who is this Mike?"

"I don't know; perhaps it's the Yellow Jacket."

"Or his companion who went off into the bush the other evening?"

"Perhaps so; he was to meet the Yellow Jacket again this evening about seven o'clock."

"We'll provide for both of them ; but first we must secure the inhabitants of the red-house. But we had better do things quietly. Are you strong enough to take a note to the police station ? if so meet me with the constable, who will accompany you, at the corner by the post-office, and I will get ready in the meantime."

Taking a drink of tea, and munching away at a hunch of bread, I immediately proceeded to the police-office, where, at the magistrate's requisition, I was aided at once by four constables, without questions, and, accompanied by one of them, I went to the place of meeting, the other three straggling singly to avoid remark, but keeping me in sight. It was still early morning, and there were very few people about. Mount Wellington had a fine white mantle spread over him, and the morning was brilliant and frosty. I found the magistrate at the spot agreed on, and we immediately proceeded to the red-house.

"Go round to the back," said the magistrate to two of the constables, "and secure any one who tries to escape ; if they resist, fire without hesitation."

One of the constables then knocked at the door.

"Do you think we have force enough ?" said I.

"Oh ! plenty for the daytime ; besides we are in reach of assistance if we want it, and these constables are used to the trade. They don't answer ; knock again."

"Try if the door is fast."

"The door seems fast enough, but we will soon prize it open, if your honour will give the word."

"Knock and ring once more. — No answer ! Lose no time, my men ; we'll stand no nonsense ; get open the door the shortest way."

"Stay," said one of the constables to the other, who was about to apply a sort of crow-bar to wrench open the door; "perhaps they have bolted themselves, and only locked the door; let me try with my quiet persuader."

With this he produced a bunch of large skeleton keys, and selecting one with a sort of instinct, he applied it to the lock, which yielded readily, and the door stood open.

"I thought it was so," said he; "they've bolted."

"New search the house carefully," said the magistrate, "and lose no time about it."

"We'll search," said the constable, "but we shall find nobody, you may depend on it."

The house was searched accordingly from top to bottom, and every cranny examined, and the flooring taken up, but no one was found. All this took up some time, and it was now past eight o'clock. There was a writing-desk in the parlour in which I had had the interview with the person who called himself John Wolsey, which was open and deranged, as if some papers had been hastily abstracted from it. The magistrate looked rapidly through it, and then sealed it up, and gave it into the charge of one of the constables. Various parts of dress were scattered about in the principal room, which seemed to have been left in a hurry, and among them the pair of drab trousers and the black gaiters which I had observed the evening before. I pointed them out, and the constable, who had opened the door with his skeleton key, examined them closely.

"These are country made," said he, "I'll swear, by the stitches. Perhaps the maker has put his mark on them, as they do sometimes in the country at home."

Turning up the waistband, he showed us a bit of canvass, on which was the words "Thomas Sparks, York."

"It's very thoughtless," said the constable, proud of his cleverness, "for a gentleman that is engaged in this sort of fun to go about with breeches with a brand-mark on 'em. We have got a clue to where these clothes were made at any rate."

"York!" said the magistrate; "that corresponds with the information contained in the Gypsy's papers. Take care of all these clothes, and especially of these trousers; make them into a bundle, and I will put my seal on them."

"And now," said I, "what's to be done next?"

"The rogues have got the start of us," said the magistrate; "I should not wonder if they have gone to the place of rendezvous at Seven-mile Beach; we must go after them; but first I must provide for the Yellow Jacket and his friend, at their meeting this evening, in case we should not be back in time. Go," said he to one of the constables, "and get the ferry-boat ready to cross over to Pitt-Water—the horse ferry-boat—we may want to ride. Two of you will go with me on a secret expedition."

We then repaired to our inn, and having made a hasty breakfast, we went down to the jetty, and, accompanied by two of the constables, we leaped our horses into the ferry-boat, and pushed off from the shore.

Chapter Thirty-Fourth.

The Colonel Constable — The Track in the Snow — Seven-mile Beach — The Desolate Hut — The Discovery — Baulked again.

WE urged the boatmen to make the best of their way over the river to the Pitt-Water side, and the constables assisting, we soon neared the opposite shore.

"The snow lies thick on the land," observed the magistrate.

"It won't lie there long," said one of the boatmen; "the wind has got into the north, with a little westing in it; when the sun comes out, the snow will disappear in no time; see how the light air draws down the river."

"Many persons passed this morning?" asked my friend.

"Not many; may be half a dozen or so. There was one party in a precious hurry to get across, a little before six o'clock; they took a wherry and sculled over to Kangaroo Point. It's a shame to let people go over that way when there's a regular ferry-boat! Keep her off the point a bit, Bill; mind the shoal. It's a shame; and the Governor ought to stop it. But they were no good, I'll warrant. There was one pale-faced chap in a black coat that looked as if the baillies were arter him."

"Which way did they take when they landed?" said I.

"Oh! we couldn't see which way they took from the

jetty; but they told me they went off in the direction of Knopwood's Farm; but I don't see what could take 'em that way; that's not the way to Pitt-Water. They're arter no good, I'm sure, or else they'd ha' gone by the reg'lar ferry what's provided for people on purpose."

So saying, by a shift of the helm, he brought the broad-side of the boat abreast of the landing-place; and we all got out of the boat,—our horses, who were used to the work, jumping out with the same readiness as the biped.

Taking a hint from the boatman's communication, we immediately proceeded in the direction of Knopwood's Farm, and it was not long before we came to marks of footsteps in the snow. There were marks of two persons having passed that morning, the impression of the feet of one being large and broad, and of the other small and narrow.

"These are our game," said one of the constables; "they have been in a hurry to get over the ground; see how they have digged their toes into the snow in their haste. You see when a person walks slow and leisurely, he puts his foot flat on the ground, and takes it up even; but when he runs or walks quick, he bends his foot, and digs his toe into the ground, leaving quite a different trace from the other."

"Well—that's good," said the magistrate; "I should never have thought of that. Why (to the constable), you can track like a native!"

"Better, I hope, a little," replied the constable; "though those black chaps have a knack of tracking in the bush quite wonderful to see at times; but I know a

trick more than they, I fancy. Look at this; here's a shoe that I found in the red-house. A native wouldn't have thought of that now. Look here; it fits exactly the small print in the snow. Now we're right on the scent, I reckon; but they're a good bit ahead of us, and we have no time to loose, if we are to spoil their fun."

"Now we are sure of our track," said the magistrate; "I think you and I, Thornley, had better ride on. The marks are so plain that we cannot miss them; and we will leave the constables to follow us."

"That's the way," said the constable, "try to get up with them, sir, if you can; but I don't think you'll be far before us, if I guess right."

We trotted on accordingly, and easily tracked the footsteps till we came to one end of the Seven-mile Beach, when the marks were lost in the sea. We tied our horses to a tree, and searched narrowly about, but we could not recover the trace of the footsteps. The tide was still coming in, but it was nearly high-water. We directed our eyes along the beautiful margin of the crescent-shaped beach, on which the sea was breaking loudly. The white foam of the waves sparkled in the sun, giving an animated appearance to the scene, that inspired cheerfulness and activity, but we could see no sign of living thing; but a low-masted vessel was disappearing in the distance. We were quite at fault, and we rambled from the stony beach to the bush, and from the bush to the beach, quite at a loss how to recover the track, which seemed lost in the sea. While we were still searching for it, the constables came up at a trot, and Sanders, the one who had exhibited his knowledge of tracking in the snow, sat down on the shingles.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but I'm blown with this run. Here's a beautiful place! It's remarkable that the sea is always rough on this beach; it always breaks more or less as you see it now, and you may hear the roaring for miles and miles when there's a high wind setting in-shore. Well, sir, your honour seems dead beat. Water leaves no track?"

"We have searched all about for more than a mile round, and we can find nothing," said the magistrate. "I fancy they must have been taken off by a boat, for it's plain they have gone to the water's edge, but here I lose them."

"Let me think," said Sanders. "Jim Burke's hut must be about midway between this and the other end of the beach, and about half a mile inland, behind that rise yonder that you see in the distance, with some scrub on it. I'll be bound they've kept on the sands, knowing the tide was coming in, and then cut over to the hut, but we'll soon find that out."

We proceeded in a body along the margin of the shingle, the other constable searching inland, and continued our way without discovering the track for three or four miles, when the other man, who was a little in advance of us, made a sign with his hand.

"That's the way to do it," said Sanders; "never shout out or make a noise when you're after game in the bush, whether it's man or beast."

"He's found the track, I suppose?" said I.

"To be sure he has, and so have we; look here; let's try my shoe—fits exactly! Now we have 'em again, sir."

"Follow us as fast as you can," said the magistrate, "we'll push on."

"You'll see the hut directly you round the little hill," said Sanders; "but if they show fight, better wait till we come up. Soft and easy does it."

We cantered on to the little hill before us, and in a few minutes we reached the hut. It was the very picture of desolation. The sides were constructed of that which is technically known in the colony by the name of "wattle-and-dab," formed of upright stakes, with twigs interlacing them hurdle fashion, and rudely plastered with mud. The roof, which was thatched with native grass, was rough and out of order, and some planks nailed together and fastened to a cleft log by hinges of bullock's-hide, composed the door. A curtain of kangaroo-skin, much the worse for wear, and looking as if it had the mange, was pegged over the opening which formed the window. Some big pebbles from the beach, with rough slabs of the stone which is abundant almost everywhere in Van Diemen's Land, were piled up with an intermingling of mud, to serve the purpose of a chimney. We saw in a moment that it was empty.

"Poor country house for an independent gentleman," said Sanders; "but retired—very! Nobody would think of looking for this rural retreat, unless he knew where to pitch on it. Many a stolen sheep has been cut into mutton-chops in this hut, I'll be bound, without troubling the butcher to call at the Marine Villa for orders."

"Don't lose any time, Sanders," said the magistrate, "we must go to work again; you're a clever fellow, so try if you can discover anything to give us information of the parties we are in pursuit of."

"Let Seroggs try first, please sir," said Sanders, "and that will give me time to rest, for I'm almost knocked up."

The other constable made a rigorous search, but he could find nothing in or near the hut but the remains of some scorched sheepskins, which had most likely been burnt to avoid detection.

"Now Sanders," said the magistrate, "try what you can do; but you must look sharp, for the sun is melting the snow fast, and we shall soon lose the tracks."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Sanders, roused by this remark, "I did not think of that. Now let's have a look at the premises."

"Scroggs," said he, "have you searched the thatch where it has been disturbed there?"

"It's only the wind," said his less observant coadjutor; "the wind has blown the thatch about all round."

"Yes," said Sanders, "but that's to leeward of the wind; don't you see, by the bend that the trees have got, which way the wind blows in these parts? That thatch has been disturbed lately, I'll swear, and not by the wind, or I know nothing of my trade."

Thus speaking, the acute and practised constable mounted on the shoulders of his fellow, and thrust his arm into the part of the thatch which had excited his suspicions.

"I thought so," said he; "but what have we got here? A tinder-box! No great find this. Lots of tinder, with flint and steel all complete! Handy to get a light with, but no great use at present."

"Let me look at it," said the magistrate. "Turn out the tinder, and see if there are marks about the box."

"No marks about it, sir," said Sanders, "except the tinman's. Don't let the wind blow away the tinder, Sam; one never knows what one may want in the bush. I've

known the time when its weight in gold would have been given for that bit of tinder at Oyster Bay. Let me put it back again. . . . Eh! what's this? Look here, sir, here's a name on the unburnt part of the tinder? The rag has been the upper part of an old stocking, and here's the name of 'John Shirley;' who's this John Shirley now, I should like to know?"

The magistrate took the tinder-box, without making any remark, and drawing me aside, we conversed for a few minutes apart.

"George Shirley is the real name of the Gypsy," said the magistrate, "if his packet speaks truth. It seems that we have lighted on a near relation when we least expected it."

"I see it all," said I, a sudden flash of light breaking in upon me; "the person that called himself John Wolsey struck me that night as resembling some one whom I had seen before; it's the bush-ranger. He gave me a look, when he discovered my disguise, which reminded me of other features which I could not call to mind; it was the look of the Gypsy bush-ranger as he rolled over the precipice at the Clyde. That's it! I see it all! This is the brother who is next heir, if the girl was out of the way. Depend upon it, that's the clue to all this mystery."

"I think as you do," said the magistrate; "but there's a great deal to be explained still. In the mean time let us try to recover the poor child, for if our surmises are correct, the party who has gone so far will not stop short in effecting his object. I hope the poor girl may not be murdered before we come up with her. I don't like the appearance of that schooner that we saw in the distance

when we came to the Seven-mile-Beach. But we have no time to lose, let us be moving; the men are rested by this time, and we can push on."

"There ought to be a third track here," said Sanders, "but I don't see it. A child's foot is light, but it ought to leave its mark on the snow. Here are the other two, and a new one, as if making off in the direction of the creek, where a boat could take them off, but I don't see the little one's. The large foot makes a deep mark in the snow, and deeper than before. How's that? I have it; the large foot has carried the child, to conceal the taking of it. Thoughtful that; but it's hard if I can't match any one in the colony at this game. There they go; and large-foot doesn't like his load, for you see he goes stumbling on, and here he has been down; but he's up again—and there they go; and, by George, here's the print of the little one's foot, when her bearer had the tumble. They trod it out, as they thought, but here it is as plain as can be on the top of this tuft of native grass, with the snow on it, like the sugar of a twelfth-cake; Hurrah! my lads, we have 'em! Three miles will bring us to the creek, and then we shall see what comes next."

In little more than half an hour we came to the edge of the creek, which at high water is deep and navigable, but at the fall of the tide is a succession of shoals, through which it is difficult to direct even a small boat. The searching eye of Sanders soon espied an indentation which had recently been made by the prow of a boat striking against the bank, and we had the mortification to feel that the parties of whom we were in pursuit had by that means escaped for the present beyond our reach.

Chapter Thirty-Fifth.

The Consultation — Middle-aged Gentleman gets tired of Adventures at last—The Track regained—An extempore Dinner and fresh Oysters—A new Horror.

THE diligent constable examined with great care all the parts about, but there was no trace of footsteps. The snow was now disappearing fast, but there was enough on the ground to show the mark of the foot. The sun shone brilliantly and warm, and we stood round the spot for some minutes looking into the water, as if by some miracle we should see the track of the boat. The magistrate was the first to break silence.

“Where’s the nearest boat to be got?”

“Nothing to be had nearer than Pitt Water,” said Sanders, “and it’s all a chance if there’s one there; but if we had a boat, what could we do with it; how could we tell which way they have gone?”

“They might have made use of some boat to cross over to the land on the other side,” said the magistrate, “for the purpose of baffling our track; in that case, the track would be visible on the other side.”

“To be sure,” said Sanders; “how was it that I didn’t think of that? If it was not for the shoals and the mud, we might swim it with one of the horses; but there’s no help for it; we can’t get on without a boat of some sort.”

"Then we must lose no time about it; can you show me the shortest cut to the township at Pitt Water?"

"Let me alone for that," said Sanders; "I should like to know the place in Van Diemen's Land that I couldn't show you the shortest cut to."

"Then come with me, and perhaps Mr. Thornley will lend you his horse, that we may get over the ground the quicker."

"One word with you," said I, "before we go further. I don't quite like this new adventure," I added, drawing the magistrate aside; "to tell the truth, I am tired of being dragged into new scrapes; as soon as one ends, another begins. Besides, we are not prepared for a lengthened pursuit, and my head is not right; that knock on it from the life-preserver has left a sensation which is anything but agreeable; and we are not armed."

"You have your double-barrel."

"But you have no arms, and the constables have nothing but their sticks. Sanders, have you got any weapon about you?"

Sanders exhibited the huge stick which served as his walking staff."

"I don't mean that; have you got any fire-arms?"

"You don't see any, do you?"

"No; that's why we ask."

"Do you think," said Sanders, "that an old hand would ever engage in anything that looks like business without his tools?" and opening his waistcoat, he disclosed two small pistols in a concealed pocket on each side of his waistcoat.

"And your mate?"

"He has nothing but his staff. But Lord bless you, sir! it seldom comes to that. I carry mine for caution's sake, but it's seldom necessary to show 'em, even. You see, when a man's pounced upon by a constable, he's cowed like, because he thinks that an officer has a right to take him, and his mind is used to feel that he can't resist an officer; it's a habit like that loose characters get. So while he is nonplused, we just take him gently, and clap the darbies on him, and then we have him like bricks."

"That's all very well," I continued, walking a few steps aside, "but really I don't see that I am called on to expose my life in this matter. Had we not better let the police magistrate take it up? He is clever, and used to these things. Besides, I don't see the necessity of taking the matter into our own hands; it is an affair for the authorities to interfere in; for if the girl is the daughter of the Yorkshire George Shirley, and the Gypsy's tale is true, she is an important personage, and it's a matter for the government to take up."

"All very true, my dear fellow," said my friend, "but it's the time. While we are going back, and going about the business formally, these rascals may convey the girl away, or, God knows! murder her, perhaps."

"I rather think," said I, "they have some motive for not killing her, or they would have done it before, and not have encumbered themselves with her in this chase; to marry her, maybe, to some one. But we have no time to indulge in surmises on that point, nor would it be of any use to us to resolve it at this moment. The matter in hand is to consider the propriety of our taking on ourselves the finding of the girl."

"As to that," said the magistrate, "my mind is made up; I can act in any part of the colony, my commission being made out for the whole of the island, though for convenience sake, we are all appointed to particular districts, and we are expected, of course, not to meddle with matters beyond them unnecessarily. But I consider this a case of necessity, and a pressing one, and I think it my duty not to neglect it. I must in fairness allow that I like these excitements, but I am differently circumstanced to you, who have a family. But wait here, at all events, till we return to relieve you; this spot ought not to be left unwatched; and indeed, I want your horse, if you have no objection, to mount the constable as a guide, as he is the only one among us who knows the road."

"Well," said I, "if it must be so, it must; but I must say frankly, I am tired of these expeditions. I'm wanted at home, and I've had enough of them."

"I see," said my friend, "you are not romantic."

"Not I! I'm a plain Surrey farmer turned into a settler, and as to your romance, I leave that to young fellows like you. I would rather have half a dozen mutton-chops just now than any dish of romance that you could cook up for me." And so saying, I sat myself down by the side of the water, with the other constable for my companion, and the magistrate and Sanders cantered off in the direction of Sorrell-Town, the nascent metropolis of Pitt-Water.

I was almost tired out, when a shout from the opposite side of the inlet attracted our attention, and I sprang to my feet. I saw the magistrate on horseback, standing on the high bank. He took off his hat and waved it,

from which I concluded that he had some good news for us ; but I could not tell what, for it was too far for his voice to reach us. My companion thought he could distinguish the word "boat," but to me it seemed only the usual "cooce," the colonial way of throwing the voice to a distance. But my companion was right, for presently afterwards we discovered a boat making its way to us through the intricate passages of the inlet, for it was now almost low water, and the numerous shoals made the navigation very difficult. As it was, we had to plunge into the mud before we could get into the boat, and we were obliged to make a long round before we could reach the shore. While we were making the passage, I asked the man in the boat, for there was only one, what the news was.

"No news," said he, "except that I hear you are in pursuit of two men and a girl who passed over here in the morning. I was down here looking after some fish, when I saw them just about where I took you up, and they said they wanted to cross over, and they offered me, that is, the gentleman did, a couple of dollars, if I would put them over. I thought it odd to see the girl with them, but it was no business of mine."

"What sort of a girl was she?" I asked eagerly, for this was the first person I had met who had seen my troublesome charge.

"Oh ! just like other girls, but I did'nt see her face ; but she seemed very tired and sick, poor thing ! One of the men carried her in his arms, and I think she had been crying a good deal ; but she didn't cry in the boat ; she seemed afraid of the man in the black coat. She can't be more than six or seven years old, I take it ; and

what their game is I don't understand. However, it's no business of mine."

"Much fish hereabouts?" said I.

"Fish! bless you, the waters hereabouts are as full of fish as they can cram; but they are poor things for eating, most of them. As you get farther up the inlet, the creeks and little ponds that the tide leaves are full of fish; and the ground-sharks are as thick as they can swim."

"Ground-sharks! that's unpleasant. How big are they?"

"Not big enough to do much mischief; they're most of them as big as a large codfish—some bigger—weighing a matter of ten, or fifteen, or twenty pounds. The natives eat 'em, but they're rank things to my taste."

"How do the natives catch them?"

"They don't catch them at all; they spear 'em with their long thin spears; and then they put them over the fire a bit, and eat 'em half raw; but they don't seem to like 'em much. It's only when they can't get other food. And now, masters, this is as near as I can bring you; the mud is awkward, but it isn't above leg-deep, and the bottom is hard enough when you get there. But if you are good climbers, I can run you right against the cliff yonder, and so you may get on the shore dry-footed."

Receiving my assent to this latter proposition, he ran his boat to the bank accordingly, and with a good deal of difficulty I and the constable scrambled to the top. We found the magistrate and Sanders waiting to receive us, with another man on horse-back, and on the ground was a huge basket which they had brought with them.

A bush-fire of dead wood which they had kindled was burning briskly.

The snow had almost disappeared, but there was still sufficient for a keen eye accustomed to the bush to distinguish the sunken traces of the party we were in pursuit of.

"You see," said the magistrate, pointing to the almost obliterated footsteps, "we are on the scent, but they have got the start of us, and the snow is nearly melted, for it don't remain long on the ground in this country."

"Upon my word," said I, "I think I must decline going any further. I am so weak and faint, that really I am not fit for a bush excursion; and I must confess I am so vulgar as to want something to eat."

"We have thought of that," said Sanders, "there's the prog; we wouldn't break into it, but waited till you could join us."

"Now, my lad," said the magistrate, "produce your provisions."

The stranger, who had the appearance of a respectable servant, immediately spread on the log of the tree on which we were sitting a white table-cloth; and arranged plates, and knives, and forks.

"I wish I could get a drink of something," said I, "but I suppose there's no water hereabouts but what's brackish."

"Water! who thinks of water?" said the magistrate, gaily; "here's a bottle of Barelay's own stout. Who has got a corkscrew? Here's a job! no corkscrew! It's strange how people will go about without a corkscrew, the only thing that is ever useful, and never to be had when wanted. Oh, you have got one, my lad, that's

very clever of you. Here, Thornley, drink. There's nothing like porter in the bush, only it's not to be had everywhere. You see, I did not forget you."

"What have you got to eat?" said I, considerably refreshed with my draught; "I had but a scanty breakfast."

"Then you shall make the better dinner. Bring him out, my lad! There's a splendid fellow! A goose is better hot, perhaps, but I think we can manage him as he is;—allow me," helping me to a leg and a wing, and allotting the same portion to himself;—"and as to our friends the constables, they may solace themselves with that cold shoulder of mutton."

"I'll have a dig at the mutton in a minute," said Sanders; "but I shall treat myself to a few oysters first."

"Oysters! Is the man distraught with fasting? You're not near Billingsgate-market, friend. What puts oysters into your head?"

"I'll put the oysters somewhere else in five minutes," said the constable; "you don't know whereabouts you are;—this little bay is full of oysters, as I'll soon show you. Scroggs, my boy," said he to his mate, "will you have some natives?"

"I don't mind if I do," said the accommodating Scroggs; "a few dozens of oysters sharpen the appetite."

Without more ado, the two constables took off their shoes and stockings, and stripping their trousers high up their legs, they borrowed a large cloth from the lad with the basket, and waded into the water thirty or forty yards. Reaching down their arms, they soon

filled the cloth with oysters, and brought them to us, rattling them down in a great heap, and went back to the water for a fresh supply.

"Here, my lad," said my friend, "chuck some armsful of these into the fire to roast, while we pass away the time with the others. Who's got an oyster knife? That's another thing that people never think of carrying about with them, though they never know when it may be wanted, as you see. Oh! you've got a knife; handy knife this. There, lad, hook out the oysters directly you hear them crack, or they'll burn. No bad fare, my friend, for the bush—cold goose and oyster sauce. I say, this knife puts odd ideas into my head. Suppose this most respectable gentleman, John Shirley, Esq., was to use the same sort of tool on the poor little girl—eh? There, don't lay down your knife and fork—I only hinted it. Take some more goose, a leg and a wing are nothing for a hungry man. Don't spare the oysters, plenty more where those came from. I'll join you in another glass of stout."

"With all my heart," said I, feeling better and stronger for my meal; "and, after all, it would be a pity not to make an effort to recover the poor girl. I shall never forget the agony of the Gypsey when he talked of her before he was dashed to pieces over that horrible precipice."

"Come, you feel in better heart now, and all ready for another start, eh? We must make our men despatch and get ready for our march; we have brought a couple of muskets with us, and lots of cartridges; and you see my Sorrell-Town acquaintance has lent me this fowling-piece, shot-belt, and powder-horn, all complete. I found a party

just sitting down to dinner with malice *prepense* against this late goose—peace to his remains! But I soon explained matters to them, and they despatched this lad on horseback with the provender. The lady of the house was so interested about your young heroine, that a little persuasion, I think, would have induced her to join us in the pursuit. Come Sanders,” he continued, raising his voice, “another batch of oysters! Why, man, you’ll grow shelly if you take in so many of those testaceous delicacies! Holloa!—what’s the matter with the men? They have thrown down their load on the beach, and are standing aghast at something. Look, Thornley.”

I turned my head, and beheld the two constables anxiously and fearfully examining something that they saw on the beach. We hastened to the spot; and Sanders, pointing to the spot that had attracted his attention, said, to our dismay, in a more feeling tone than I had given him credit for:—

“I fear they have done for the poor child, sir;—this is sadly suspicious.”

We looked,—and in the shade near the base of the overhanging cliff, we saw the marks of tramping feet, and the white snow was crimsoned with large drops of blood.

The sight of the blood filled us all with the most anxious apprehensions; and even the phlegmatic Scroggs was moved at what appeared to denote the sad catastrophe of the little girl’s murder.

“I’ve knocked many a bullock on the head,” said he, “and cut many a sheep’s throat, and never cared for the sight of the blood—it was natural, and it’s what animals are used to; but — me! if I ever felt like this before,

—it's enough to turn one sick—after eating oysters, too! I couldn't have cut the throat of that little girl, now—though I've never seen her,—but a child's a child,—no, not for a hundred dollars—no, nor a thousand neither. Poor little thing! how she must have scriggled!"

Chapter Thirty-Six.

Who is the Murderer and the Victim?—A Settler's Fare—An Excuse for a Glass of Grog—Kangaroos in Miniature—The Chase.

"THE blood looks bad," said the magistrate, after a pause, "but that might happen a thousand ways. It's the trampling of the earth round about that looks most suspicious. See! here has been a tuft of rushes pulled up in the struggle. These rushes are thick and strong—too strong for a child to pull up, I think, even in a death-struggle. No, this was not done by a child's hand! Let us make a closer examination."

Pursuing our investigation, we found the mark of the heel of a man's shoe, which had been dugged violently into the ground, apparently in a struggle to rise, and beyond the circle where our own footsteps had trodden down the snow, and which for a moment had prevented our observing the space beyond it, we traced the appearance of some heavy body having been dragged for some distance to a spot where there was a deep hole, at the foot of some straggling rocks. By throwing in pebbles, we ascertained that the hole was of considerable depth. In looking about, the intelligent constable observed the mark of a stone of a large size having been removed, the earth in which it had been imbedded exhibiting a surface which, from its freshness, it was plain

had been but recently exposed to the air; and at short distances two more indications of the same sort were discovered.

"That pool holds the dead body of somebody, I'll be sworn," said Sanders; "but that's a secret that lies at the bottom, and I don't see the way to get at it just now; but time will show, for there never was a murder ever so secret that was not found out at last."

After a diligent search, we could find no other marks of blood than those which had first attracted the attention of the constables; but it was clear that a desperate struggle had taken place on the spot, but who was the victim, or whether there was more than one, was involved in mystery.

By this time, having recovered from the effects of my previous night's suffering, I began to warm to the work; and being moved at the sight of the blood, and the thought of the peril that the poor girl was in, if she was still alive, I was eager to continue the pursuit. I proposed, therefore, that we should not lose time in discussing the probabilities of what had taken place, but mark the exact spot, so as to be able to find it again without difficulty, and move forward without delay to the rescue of the child, whose precarious fate had inspired me with an interest which I was surprised at myself;—but I thought of my own children, and could not but feel strongly for an orphan who had been cast on my care under circumstances so remarkable, and against whose life or welfare it was evident there was some nefarious design.

We sent back our Sorell-Town purveyor liberally recompensed, and started off on the track, now become

very faint, at a rapid pace, Sanders taking the lead. It was now drawing towards the evening, and the sun was sinking fast, affording to us the not very agreeable prospect of passing the night in the bush under a winter's sky, with the likelihood of a heavy fall of snow for feather beds. We were glad, therefore, when we found that our course led us in the direction of the Coal-River, where we knew there were many settlers, some of them indeed verging towards the position of wealthy agriculturists. We skirted a succession of small farms, looking very cold and desolate at the decline of the day in the winter season, till we came to where a log fence had been broken down; we followed on, and presently came into view of the red-brick house of some thriving settler in a hollow beneath the hill. The marks of the footsteps in the snow became more and more indistinct, but after passing the centre of the enclosure, we observed the prints of the shoes of a horse.

"This looks like business," said Sanders. "You see, sir, these chaps are determined to go through with their work. They have taken some poor devil of a settler's horse, and depend upon it, sir, they have made up their minds for a run."

"I have no doubt," said the magistrate, "that their object is to get away from the island; and having been stopped at Hobart-Town, I shouldn't wonder if they were to make an attempt at Launceston."

"That would be leading us a pretty dance," said I. "It's a chase of a hundred and twenty miles at least; but we must hope to come up with them before then. If they keep their horse, they will leave a good track behind them; we must take care not to lose it. It would be

well," I added, "to measure the size and shape of the horse's shoes while we have light enough."

Sanders took the hint, and found that the horse had a broad shoe on the left fore-foot and a narrow-shaped one on the other. He took down the exact size of each shoe, and noted them with a pencil in a pocket-book.

Some flakes of snow now began to fall, and the dusk came on, warning us that if we thought of seeking a shelter for the night, it was time to look about us; but we kept on our way as long as we could distinguish the track, but the snow falling faster and faster, and darkness coming on beside, we made a halt, and deliberated on what was best to be done.

"With submission to you, sir," said Sanders to the magistrate, "it's of no use to follow a track at night; there's more lost than gained by it; for the fatigue makes one the less able to do the work next day. You see, we have 'em safe if this snow continues, which looks likely, for they cannot rub out their marks, and they must go between the river and the tier of hills; so that, by crossing the line between, we shall come on their track again. If I might venture to advise, sir, you will be all the better to-morrow for a night's rest, and if we could borrow a couple of horses hereabouts, it would be all the better, and we could make more speed in the morning."

We thought the experienced constable's advice good, and under his guidance we turned aside to the left, and after half an hour's march we came to the door of a settler's hut, where we asked permission to pass the night. It proved to be the dwelling of a man for whom the magistrate had procured a ticket of leave about two

years before, for good conduct, and who had since rented a farm of three hundred acres, of which there were about fifteen under tillage, with the working-bullocks and farming conveniences usually let with the land on such occasions. This was a lucky hit. Our first business was to make inquiries after the parties we were in pursuit of, but our new acquaintances could give us no information.

We were made welcome with all the means which the humble dwelling afforded, and the united efforts of the farmer and his wife were cheerfully rendered to furnish out our entertainment. Fresh logs were thrown on the fire, and some very lean mutton-chops, cut from a lantern-looking sheep, which was suspended from the branch of a tree outside, were immediately put into the frying-pan by the man, while the woman busied herself with the tea-things; mutton-chops for eating, and tea for beverage, being the usual repast on almost all occasions in the houses of the poorer class of settlers.

While these preparations were being made inside, we looked to our horses out of doors. There was but poor accommodation for them, but a sort of shed protected them from the snow, and they were obliged to put up with a bran mash for supper, and a tolerable feed of barley. Hay and oats were for the most part unattainable luxuries in Van Diemen's Land at that time, and not often to be obtained now; barley and wheat, or barley in the straw, being their customary food, with the grass of the country as it grows in its natural state. We were quickly summoned by our host to the repast prepared for us.

"Rather poor mutton for you, sir," said the man;

"we have but a poor run here for sheep, and it's not easy to get them through the winter with anything on their bones, but you shall have our best."

"Why, you're getting on, Richard," said the magistrate, "if you have got a flock of sheep. How many have you?"

"There's near three hundred of 'em; but they are not my own; I wish they were. I have 'em on the thirds; they were part of the farming stock, and thanks to you, sir, the owner has trusted me with them, with the rest of the farming things."

"Can you manage a ewe?"

"Not yet, sir; we have four working-bullocks, pretty good ones; but we can't manage a cow yet. This is no place for stock. If we could contrive half a dozen cows, we could make our money of them, for wife's a good dairy-woman, and we are within reach of Camp, where we could get half-a-crown a pound in money for every pound we could make. But won't you eat, sir? the things are clean, though they're homely. Will you drink tea with your meat?"

"Have you nothing but tea, Dick, for the gentlemen," said Sanders, making a wry face, which was reflected by Scroggs, "in these parts? There used to be better stuff to be had not long ago."

Dick pointed with his hand to the magistrate, and shook his head.

I understood the meaning of these masonic signs very well; so as I wished to please the constables, whom it was important for us to keep in good humour, without compromising my friend's official dignity, I displayed two five dollar notes to Sanders, who thereupon gave a significant nod, and disappeared with Scroggs."

"Good water, hereabouts?" said the magistrate.

"There's not much water for stock till you get to the river, but there's a spring handy by, that serves for our own use."

"It doesn't taste well out of a pannikin. Bah! it's like a mineral spring. You haven't got a glass tumbler, Richard?"

"We had one, sir, but it's broke, and we can't be very nice at first; but there's a teacup if you like it better. It's done enough now," said he to his wife, who had been frying a cake in the pan, and her own face at the same time, while we were discussing our dish of mutton-chops and damper. "There's a real settler's cake for you, gentlemen, made nice and light, like a pancake, only it wants eggs and milk."

"A glass of grog, now, would be no bad thing," said my friend; "but I suppose that's not easy to be got here. How far are we from any public house? Rum is better than nothing, at a pinch, though it's sad stuff generally—new and rank—the common rum from Bengal, one of the most unwholesome of all spirits; but as a medicine, now and then ——"

The worthy magistrate's dissertation on the qualities of Bengal rum was cut short by Sanders, who appeared with a bottle of that popular liquor, the same having been only half-watered, in deference to the distinguished company, for whose especial refection Sanders had enjoined the sly-shop, it was on this occasion particularly dedicated.

"Where does this come from?" asked the magistrate, in a little absence of mind, and pouring into the pannikin a decent portion of the liquid.

"Out of the bottle," said I.

"I take it as a medicine," rejoined my friend, taking the hint at the same time—"only as a medicine (Sanders and Seroggs shook their heads doubtfully); for, after all, it only spoils the water—but this water is brackish."

With this my excellent friend imbibed, with considerable relish, as it seemed to me, a tolerable dose of the medicine, and knocking the table with the edge of the tin pannikin, which made a ringing sound, as if complaining of being empty, he laid his hand promiscuous-like on the neck of the bottle, and tilting it over, directed its muzzle, in a sort of fit of abstraction, towards the capacious mouth of the pannikin.

"Any sugar, Richard?"

"Only brown, sir; we never have anything but brown; white is too expensive for new settlers."

"True, Richard, true;—this *is* brown sugar, but it tempers the spirit. I think I'll try it this time with hot water. Bale out a little from the tripod with the other pannikin. In cold weather, it's well to keep up the vital heat, Dick."

My friend sipped his boiling grog with a philosophic cheerfulness, and a readiness in accommodating himself to circumstances extremely gratifying to an intelligent mind, and when he had got half through his second pannikin, he condescended, with much complacency, to observe, that "after all, it was a tipple not to be despised, if taken now and then, and in moderation!"

Sanders and Seroggs, however, did not view the alarming deficit, which was increasing, in the solitary bottle, with the same composure, their minds, I presume, not

being so philosophically constituted; and it was with the most lively apprehensions, therefore, that they saw the magistrate raise his hand for the third time in a threatening way to the neck of the bottle, which stood handy to his reach. The intellects of the latter functionary being sharpened by the pressing nature of the danger, he forgot, in his agony, the deep respect due to the official dignity of his worship, and being unable to repress his feelings, he vociferated a tremendous "Oh!"

"What's the matter?" said the magistrate; "have you done your supper? You had better have a glass of grog. Here, Sanders, take the bottle. And now for a turn in. Richard, how can you manage for us?"

"If it wasn't for my wife, sir, you should have our little room, but we'll make you up a shake-down in this corner by the fire, and you'll lie soft enough on the wool."

"Wool! No boomahs! I hope—eh! Dick?" beginning to scratch himself instinctively at the sight of the wool.

"Pretty well for that, sir, but they will come wherever there's a house. It's the dogs, I suppose, that harbour them; but they don't meddle with us much; or else we are used to them."

"Used to them! Bless ye!" said Sanders, "all the settlers' houses in this district are full of 'em; they're 'digenous to the place. You may see 'em in summer time going down to the Coal-River to water quite regular, and hopping back again, like Christians. Lively little creturs they are, and love company. They're a sort of kangaroo in minature; and I dare say if you took the trouble to examine 'em, you would find 'em

with tails and false bellies, all complete. There's one : and there's another ! he's a regular boomah ! Ah ! my fine fellow ! I can see you are grinning at me, and expecting an elegant supper on my unfortunate person, but (here we heard a peculiar sort of crack) I'll disappoint you, you blackguard ! And you too (another crack), and—confound them ! here's a regular colony ! Well, bite away, my hearties, it's of no use trying to get rid of you, I see ! What must be, must ! I'm a doomed victim !”

The night passed away in similar complaints from the whole party, each individual waging unsuccessful war against hosts of assailants, and seasoning his maledictions, according to his quality, with such oaths and curses as came most readily to hand. As soon as the first gleam of the morning light appeared, we were on our legs ; and, after the usual preliminaries of fried mutton chops and hot tea, without milk, and damper without butter, we prepared for our march.

“ Well, Richard,” said the magistrate, “ much obliged to you for your night's lodging. But we must not eat you out of house and home. You will just give this to your wife (proffering a four-dollar bank note) to make the pot boil.”

“ Not I, sir,” said our host ; “ you don't think I'd take money from you, sir, after all your goodness to me. You are welcome to all I can offer you ; but you don't think, sir, I would be paid for seeing my”—friends, he was about to say, but he checked himself—“ for being hospitable.”

“ Very well, Dick, just as you like.”

But as I did not like to consume the man's provisions

without recompensing him for it, I pressed a two-dollar note on the lady of the mansion; and as my friend told me that he had contrived to convey the rejected four-dollar note to the same quarter, we had the satisfaction of feeling that our visit would not put the family to any inconvenience.

There had been a heavy fall of snow during the night, and it lay some inches thick on the ground. The clouds threatened more; and we resumed our pursuit with no very agreeable anticipations.

"Now, Sanders," said the magistrate, "let me see what you are worth in a difficulty. Which is our way? and how are we to find the track of the runaways? for this snow will have covered up all traces of their footsteps—the horses' and all."

"Never fear," said the constable, "the same snow that has hid one track will show another. If a snow-track is bad for following, it's worse for hiding; they can't get away from us; and if I don't find 'em, as sure as ever Seroggs would nose a bottle of rum in a plant, I'll forfeit my ticket of leave."

With this professional encouragement, we set ourselves diligently to work to discover the lost track.

Chapter Thirty-seventh.

The Chase—Scroggs's Pathos—Confirmation of the Fugitive—Unexpected Information--A Sailor on Horseback—A new Arrival.

WE were now in the most fertile part of Van Diemen's Land, the agricultural district in which the greatest part of the wheat grown in the colony was then raised, and which, from its fertility and its propinquity to water-carriage, is particularly adapted for tillage-farms. The soil in this district is above the average quality of the land in the island; some of the wheat lands having yielded good crops for more than fifteen years without manure or artificial irrigation; but it is not suited for sheep and cattle, the unlocated grazing-ground being too limited in extent. From the desirable nature of the locality—the facility of water-carriage being such a prodigious advantage for the transport of grain in a young colony—small farms soon became numerous in this neighbourhood, but, from their close proximity, there can be, of course, but few opportunities for back runs.

Our direction lay on one side of these settlements, and as it was early morning, we did not meet with a single person on our route, nor did we think it worth while to go out of our way to seek for information, as it would have been a certain loss of time, which was very precious, for a very uncertain benefit; besides, we could not tell whether we might not do more mischief than

good by entrusting our object to promiscuous persons. We kept steadily on, therefore, for five or six miles, and then we crossed the line on which we calculated the pursued party would pass, hoping to hit on their track, but without success, and it was not until we got near Brighton Plains, to the right, that we came on their footsteps.

"You see, sir," said Sanders, "we have 'em; they can't escape us now; but by the sinking of the marks, they must have made good use of their time in the night."

"The poor little girl must have suffered terribly from the cold of last night," observed the magistrate; "it was brutal to expose a child of such tender years to the inclemency of a winter's frost and snow."

"Poor little thing!" the passive Scroggs ventured to remark; "poor little thing! you don't think they cut her throat then, sir, do you? The sight of that blood has been worrying me ever since. I remember once, before I came to this country, I had to slaughter a lamb for my master, and, by mistake, I killed the pet-lamb of my young Missis. She came up just as I was a-doing of it, and I never shall forget the look she gave me. I was standing with the lamb's head between my legs and my knife ——"

"Well—well, my man," said I, for the picture that he had conjured up made me feel sick—"that will do. We can't be sure whether the child is alive or not, but it is likely that she is, by their taking the horse; I wish we could find some sign that would relieve us from our suspense. Keep your eyes open, and there's a bottle of rum for you, if you can discover anything to help us in our search."

"Ay, ay, sir, I'll keep a sharp look-out; not that I care about the rum; it's the child, poor little thing. I fancy I am always seeing her with her poor little head hanging down, and her throat ——"

"There—there, say no more about it, but get on ahead, and try if you can make any discovery. An hour—nay, a few minutes—may make the difference of life or death."

Thus urged, the obedient Scroggs moved forward in advance with some appearance of alacrity, and, stimulated partly by the present danger of the child, whose fate I believe he sincerely commiserated, and partly by the bottle of rum in prospective, he cast his eyes vigilantly about on all sides, and it was not long before he had the satisfaction of detecting a digression in the path of the pursued.

"There's been something new going on here," said he; "the small-footed man has gone away to the left, and the other man and the horse have gone on."

"It's the small foot," said Sanders, "that's plain enough; and he has gone off to the left, and I don't see the sign of his having come back. What's to be done now? There is some dodge in this that's certain."

"Do you three," said the magistrate, "go on till you get to the rise with the big gum-tree on the top of it, and wait there till I join you. I will follow this track for a mile or so, and then we can consult on the best mode of proceeding, should it appear that the parties we are in pursuit of have separated."

He cantered off, accordingly, and we presently lost sight of him behind a little hill, but before we reached the big gum-tree, he passed us at an angle, and waited

for our coming up, when he communicated the result of his visit.

Behind the hill there was a stock-keeper's hut, which we could not see from the spot where we were, and there the magistrate learned that before dawn of day a new settler had called at the hut, and asked for refreshment, saying that he had a companion whom he had left at a little distance, and for whom, as well as for himself, he wanted a supply of provisions.

"It was easy to tell he was a new settler," said the stock-keeper, "because he had on a black coat and waist-coat, and a new hat in the bush, and didn't mind showing his money to strangers!"

The stock-keeper gave him what he had ready, which consisted of some cold mutton-chops, and nearly a whole damper, with about ten pounds of uncooked meat, for which the stranger gave him a four-dollar note. My friend asked to see the note, and, pretending that he wanted a note of that particular signature, the stock-keeper readily exchanged it for other small notes.

"This note," observed the magistrate, "may help to trace our man."

My friend did not think it necessary to tell the inhabitant of the hut that we were in pursuit of this new settler, "as it was better," he said, "not to be making confidants without necessity." As the track of the small foot in the snow was easily seen on leaving the hut, he followed it up to the point where we rejoined him.

This was so far satisfactory; we were on the track of this John Wolsey, or John Shirley, and we could not be very far from him, but still there was no trace of the

little girl; but the manner of his obtaining provisions, in going alone to the hut, seemed to show that he had left the child with his companion, from the fear of being traced the more easily if she was seen with him. This consideration gave us a hope, so that we continued the pursuit with renewed spirit.

We were beginning to feel the want of food ourselves, however, and we were at a loss where to obtain it without considerable delay; and it was necessary that we should not neglect to procure a supply while we were within a reasonable distance of the settled part of the country, for our route was leading us more and more into the bush; the parties whom we were pursuing being obviously desirous of keeping away from the inhabited parts of the district through which they fled.

We did not allow these thoughts to slacken our pace, and leaving Bagdad on our left, we continued our way through a very difficult country, still with the track in view, till we came to a point which we calculated was abreast of the Green Ponds. It was now considerably past noon, and we were desperately hungry, but we did not like to relax in our pursuit, for we expected every minute to come up with the fugitives, when the track made a sudden bend to the left, and we observed the same divergence as before, but this time it was the broad-footed man. Not caring for him, we did not stop to examine into his movements, but the reason of his absence was presently explained, for about three miles farther we found the track of a second horse joining the track which we were pursuing; and from the appearance of the strides of the two horses, and the marks of the snow that was kicked up, it was plain that they had con-

trived to get possession of a second horse, and that Wolsey, not being detained by his companion being on foot, was pushing forward with all speed.

On this the magistrate immediately decided what to do. He wrote on a leaf of his pocket-book, in pencil, a request addressed to any one who might read it, that, for the purpose of furthering the ends of justice, the constables might be supplied with horses, for the hire, or the purchase of which, if necessary, he would be responsible.

"Now Sanders," said he, "there's not a moment to be lost; I and Mr. Thornley will follow them up on horseback, and take the chance of what comes; get up with them we must, or we may be too late. Try to procure horses and follow us with all speed, for we may want your assistance. And now do your best. You will not leave me at this push, I suppose, Thornley?" said he; "but if it does not suit you to stay away from your farm, I will go alone."

"I will not leave you," said I;—"if you have duty to prompt you, I have inclination."

"I have both duty and inclination," said he, and off we set at a smart canter. The party whom we pursued was evidently guided by some one who had an accurate knowledge of the country, for their track proceeded in a straight line across the island, so far as was consistent with their keeping clear of the various small settlements and farms in their route. In this way we passed through a country much less hilly than before, skirting on our left the fat flat of the "Cross Marsh," and a few miles farther the beautiful district of "The Lovely Banks," till we came to the base of the Tier over which the road

had been cut by a steep hill to Jericho, which is about forty miles from Hobart Town. Having got over Spring-Hill Tier, which winded our horses a bit, we had a strong inclination to make a tour to our left, to Jericho, to get some refreshment; but the sight of the fresh track provoked and incited us, and we pushed on after them through Fourteen-Tree Plain, and past Lemon Springs, till we got to Oatlands, the neighbourhood in which the notorious bush-ranger Howe, performed many of his exploits. It was in this part of the country that he made the remarkable escape which is still remembered in the colony, and related to new-comers over a bush fire and a kangaroo steamer. He had been taken, and his arms bound behind him; one soldier with a loaded musket went before him, and another behind. By some means never discovered he contrived to get possession of a knife, with which he quietly cut the bands that fastened him. Watching his opportunity, as they passed round the narrow base of a high hill, and before the soldier behind had come into sight, he sprung on the one before, and stabbing him in the back laid him prostrate. Seizing his musket he fired at the soldier behind, who was hastening up, and shot him dead. He then escaped into the bush.

But we met with no living thing, and we still kept on, angry at not being able to overtake the black-coated gentleman and his victim, and we passed, with longing eyes and ravenous appetites, Albany Vale and St. Peter's Pass. We had now a fine level country, but thinly covered with trees, to the neighbourhood of Antill's Ponds. By this time our horses were nearly exhausted, but the tracks now appeared fresher and fresher as we gained

upon the fugitives; we were tempted to make another effort, and we presently reached Salt-Pan Plains. At any other time we should have taken time to admire the magnificent view of these extensive plains, where the eye can range for many miles without obstruction; for in a country where timber abounds, which forms one of the most serious obstacles to the increase of a settler's tillage, the sight of a large expanse of country clear of trees never fails to excite in a colonist of Van Diemen's Land the most pleasurable contemplations. We could not help pulling up our tired horses for one minute to admire the sinking of the setting sun behind the lofty mountains to our left, causing their cloud-capped tops to glow with a peculiar light of serene and placid brilliancy.

To the east of these plains are extensive ponds saturated with salt, from which the settlers within reach obtain their supplies in the summer season by evaporation, by means of the sun's heat. In front of us was the superb mountain of Ben Lomond, the outlines of which, though the dusk was coming on, were still distinct in the white line of snow which covered its towering summit.

"One effort more," said the magistrate, "and we shall come up with them."

But our horses were sadly fagged, and in want of food, as well as ourselves. We alighted, took off their saddles, and rubbed down their backs with our handkerchiefs.

"Don't let our horses get stiff," said my friend; "as long as they're warm, they will keep on, but if they get stiffened in the cold they will knock up. One effort more."

But our horses, good as they were, and fitted, like most of the horses on the island, to bear long and continued fatigue with but scanty refreshment, soon showed unequivocal symptoms of exhaustion. We turned to the left, therefore, towards Blackman's Bridge, near which we knew we could obtain food and shelter.

With that sort of instinct which I have often observed in the animal, our wearied horses pricked up their ears as we turned them in the direction of the inn; and snorting with visible signs of gladness, their strength appeared to revive, and they bore us gaily to our place of rest. Our first care was to see them properly tended. We gave them a warm mash of siftings, and let them pick a little at some barley in the straw, till they had recovered from the excitement of their travel. In the meanwhile, we put some barley in soak in boiling water, for there were no oats to be had, which we mixed with a small portion of siftings, and fed them well, taking care not to give too much at a time. We took particular pains to have them well rubbed down, particularly their legs and heels, for a good dressing is as good as meat and drink to a tired horse.

"You've given them a warming," said the ostler, who, from a weaver in England, had become the tender of horses in Van Diemen's Land; they seem to be made of a good sort of stuff, these beasts, but they look a little mottled now with sweat, like shot silk by a side light. Where are you come from?"

"We have come some distance," said we, "but we have ridden very fast, which has blown the horses a bit." I did not choose to tell him that we had come nearly seventy miles without pulling up, although, for

the honour of colonial horse-flesh, I had a strong inclination to brag of it.

Having seen our horses' feet steeped with a cooling application, and our minds being at ease about their comfort, we entered the public room of the inn.

I need scarcely say, that while we were looking to our horses, the usual meal of the country, the eternal mutton-chops, were prepared for our entertainment by the people of the house, to which were added some kangaroo-tail soup, and the unusual luxury of pancakes made with eggs. Some capital bottled stout, Barclay's, of course, added a zest to our supper, and by the aid of some excellent brandy, we soon found ourselves restored to our usual spirits.

We were discussing the propriety of a second tumbler, when the clattering of a horse's hoofs, which suddenly stopped at the door of our hostel, and the slight bustle usual on such occasions, announced the arrival of a new guest. As there was only one room for travellers in the inn, which had been hastily built of weather-boards on speculation, the landlord ushered in the new-comer to the apartment where we were sitting, and he entered the room without ceremony, shaking from his rough great coat a plentiful shower of snow.

"Servant, gentlemen, hope I don't intrude. Landlord—steward—landlord—d'—, that is, bless my eyes, get us something to eat. Here have I been riding on that rickety old craft; d'— him—that is, bless him—he's as crank as a Norway timber-ship—for I don't know how long, and the cold has made me so sharp set, I'm ready to eat the purser!"

The stranger, whom we had regarded with some cu-

riosity, as he gave vent to his nautical effusions, was a seafaring man, by his dress, which his language seemed to corroborate; but as I had recently attempted the personation of that character myself, I was not disposed to give him credit for the reality without further examination.

Thought I to myself, "It's all very well to call a horse a 'craft,' and to sport your 'starboard,' and 'larboard,' but who knows that this is not another would-be sailor?"

I gave a glance at the magistrate, as I revolved these thoughts, and I saw by the gleam of his eye that he had the same suspicion as myself; so by a sort of tacit confederacy, we began to sift our new acquaintance.

"You don't seem to have enjoyed your ride, sir?" said my friend.

"Enjoy it! Lots of enjoyment in riding an old brute like that in a snow-storm. I thought it never snowed in this country?"

"Sometimes," I said, "but not often, and snow does not remain long on the ground. You seem, sir, to have had a feathering?"

"Feathering, do you call it? It wasn't much like a feather bed, I can tell you. Three times have I been capsized coming from that last place—Antill Ponds, I think they call it; they have the queerest names for places in this country. Oh! here's my supper; mutton-chops! of course—I'm d'—that is, I'm blessed if I've ate anything but mutton-chops since I've been in the country; the sheep in these parts are all chops, from head to starn, I think!"

"There's some capital kangaroo-tail soup," suggested the landlord.

"Kangaroo-tail soup! Ah! there it is again. I'm blessed if I've heard about anything but kangaroo-tail soup all the while I was at Launceston. They souped me there night and day. It was a regular caulking. If I'd gone on with it, I do believe I should have been quite transmogrified, for I felt a tail a-growing, and was beginning to hop already! But d'—"

"What's the matter?" said I, for our facetious friend suddenly stopped, and with knife and fork outstretched, seemed to be taken with a fit. I got up instantly, with visible signs of alarm, to assist him; but he held up the hand that had the fork in it.

"Avast there!" said he, "I was only counting twenty."

"Counting twenty! what on earth do you count twenty for?"

"Oh, you see, my wife made me promise, whenever I was going to swear, to count twenty, to stop it's coming out; so I always do it, 'cept in a gale of wind or so, when one can't be particular; and that's why I say 'bless me,' because, as my wife says, if I must say something to relieve myself, better say something good than the other. Ay, ay, she's the one to keep a good look-out ahead; there's nothing in the voyage of life like having a consort. She was like to lose me though, once, for my craft gave a tremendous lurch just before I got here. I held hard on by the leather tackle, but it was of no use; down I came by the run."

"You are not used to riding on horseback, I suppose?" said my friend.

"Used to it! no—nor never shall be. I started off to see the interior of the country, ten days ago, and

THE SAILOR'S DESTINATION.

managed very well while I trusted to my own legs, though it's not so pleasant walking on shore as at sea—there's no motion to steady you. But when I was at Jericho—there's a rum name for a place!—I got a letter from my skipper to tell me I must come back with all sail. So what did I do, but I hired that horse, that somebody wanted to send back to Launceston."

"But that enabled you to get on quicker?"

"Slower, by four knots! for such a pitching about I never had before! It wasn't easy to get steerage-way at all, the thing was so slow and lumberesome; and when you did, it wasn't much better, for somehow the cantankerous brute never would answer the helm the right way, let alone the awkwardness of the tiller ropes coming aft instead of for'ard, which kept confusing me; at last I clapped my hand to his tail, and then the brute stopped and gave a heave up with his stern legs, but I contrived, by twisting his tail hard to starboard or larboard, as I wanted it, to make him steer this side and that; for I tried to keep him in the middle of the road, to have the force of the tide, and he kept sheering to the side, as if he was in a back eddy. It was a rare sight to see, I fancy! But here I am, safe at last!"

"Starboard and larboard!" said I to myself, "it's all very well, but it won't do!" "And pray, sir," said I, aloud, "how was it that you happened to get aboard that clumsy craft that has occasioned these mishaps?"

"Eb?" said he, inquiringly, and suspending his draught of rum-and-water; "and pray, mate," said he, with an incredulous grin, "what ship do you belong to?"

"Me!"

"Ay—look at your rig! Oh, oh!—I see!—Yes,

yes," putting his finger on his nose; "false colours! Want to steal off!—Blue jacket better than a yellow one—eh?"

"Why," said I, "what do you take me for?"

"Not for a sailor! But, never fear, never tell tales! No business of mine! Wish you well out of it, and better luck another time, that's all I can say."

Thought I, to myself, "the tables are turned drolly enough," for I had on the sailor's dress in which I had disguised myself in Hobart Town, with the exception of the little tarpaulin hat, which I had replaced by my own black beaver, and I was exposed to the very suspicion which I had rather too hastily formed of our new acquaintance. This was provoking, especially as the real sailor obstinately persisted in mistaking me for a prisoner in disguise, trying to escape from justice.

"And pray," said I, "how do you know I am not a sailor?"

"How do I know? Lord love ye! D'ye think one sailor can't tell another, and know a landsman from a blue-jacket? Did you ever see a sailor sit with his back against a chair, and one leg crossed over another that fashion? what would become of his sea-legs? But never mind; I'm as mute as a stock-fish; a Yorkshireman, you know, can see through an inch-board, but he never tells what's behind it."

"A Yorkshireman, are you?" said I eagerly; "from what part?"

"From Whitby; that is, I served my time at Whitby, but I was born on Squire Shirley's estate, near Lime-dale, close by Heron Abbey—everybody knows it in Yorkshire. My father was a tenant of Squire Shirley's, but I would go to sea, as boys will sometimes."

"Then you know this Squire Shirley?"

"To be sure I did—William Shirley; but he's dead now."

"How long ago?"

"It's about two years since."

"Had he any children?"

"No children, but he had two brothers."

"And what is become of them?"

"The eldest, George, went away somewhere, nobody knew whither. He was a wild chap in his youth, was George; but the youngest, John, is at the Abbey, because, as there was no account of George, of course John was next heir to the estates."

"What are the estates worth?" asked I.

"I don't know that, but it is one of the prettiest estates in the county."

"Did William leave any will?" asked the magistrate.

"There was a talk about some will, but I never knew the rights of it. It was said George died years ago, but some people thought there was some mystery about it."

I exchanged looks with my friend the magistrate at this information, which had come on us thus unexpectedly, and in so strange a way, but we did not think it necessary to communicate to our new acquaintance the deep interest which we took in these inquiries; and, under the pretext of our seeing our horses well littered down for the night, we left the room, and had a short private conversation together on our way to the stable.

"Can we make any use of our new acquaintance?" said I.

"I don't see that he would be of any use at present,"

said the magistrate; "he would be rather in the way than otherwise. But we shall see when we get to Launceston, and then we can act accordingly."

The snow lay two or three inches deep on the ground, but the night was clear and bright, and we regretted the time that we were losing, but it was unavoidable; for the darkness of the night, which aids a man to escape, is an effectual bar to his pursuit in a country where he can be followed only by the foot-marks that he leaves behind him. We were obliged, therefore, to put up with the delay, and, indeed, our horses would not have been in a condition to travel before the morning; so, bidding our new acquaintance good night, and leaving him to the enjoyment of a large tumbler of grog, in which we had induced the landlord to join him, we retired to our beds, having made arrangements for resuming our journey at the first dawn of day on the morrow.

But the course of events did not allow us to enjoy our rest unbroken. A little after midnight we were waked up by a vigorous knocking at the door from the butt-end of a heavy whip, and we heard a voice outside demanding admittance.

Chapter Thirty-eight.

The Van Diemen's Land Jockey—Swopping—The Chase Renewed—Retributive Justice—The Natives—New Dangers.

"You need'nt knock the door in with your hammering," called out a voice, which I recognised as that of the landlord of the Emu—"can't you wait till people put a bit of clothes on? Who are you? and what do you want at this time of night?"

"Who am I, and what do I want? Well, that's a good one! Don't you know Charley Chaffem?"

"The Sandy Bay Jockey! By George! here's a spree! Why, what has brought you to this side of the island?—and snow on the ground too."

"Why, a horse has brought me; that is, two horses; one that I'm on, and one that I'm off; and there's a riddle for you, Master Jemmy."

"And where have you come from?"

"I only left the Coal River this morning. What do you think? Some busy gentleman has walked off with my bay horse! He didn't come home last night for his corn, and I knew there was something wrong, but I could do nothing till daylight, and then I tracked him right across the country, with two other blackguards with him, for there were three horses in all, and afterwards a fourth—so there's a lot of them in for it—till the dark came, and then I cut across to the high road. But don't stand

talking there; open the door, and be alive; I want to come in and get a snack of something."

As I guessed that this visit from the owner of the stolen horse would render some explanation necessary, I thought it best to meet the difficulty at once, so I got up and dressed myself. By the time that I had entered the public room, which was next to my bedroom, the inquisitive Charley Chaffem had visited the stable, which I expected, where he had examined the magistrate's horse and mine, which were comfortably reposing themselves on luxurious beds of straw.

"He can't be far off," said he to the landlord, alluding to the thief, in continuation of some comments in which he had been pleased to indulge in the stable, "for here are two of the blackguards safely housed with you. I know them by the shoeing of their horses; they're Nick Naylor's shoes, of Frog-street, in Camp. You may always swear to his shoes when they're new. I tracked them all the way, and I could pick 'em out among a hundred. A pretty pass the country is come to, when people take to stealing of horses! but I'll make the rascals swing for it, if there's law to be had in the colony."

"A very pleasing compliment," thought I, "to me and my friend. My good sir," I said, "I am the owner of one of those horses, and my friend is the owner of the other. I could not help overhearing what you said as you entered the room, but I assure you you are mistaken, as I could easily explain to you if I was at liberty to do so."

"Hear him!" cried out our acquaintance of the night before, who had risen from his wooden sofa with the ha-

bitual readiness of a seaman—"hear him! he was a sailor last night, and now he's jawing away like a sea-lawyer! I say my friend," said he to me, "no go! eh? grabbed! rather unlucky; but sailors shouldn't meddle with horses; always come to mischief when they try to show off like the long-tails."

"The devil's in it," thought I, "I shall be in another mess if I don't take care!"

"The long and the short of it is," said I aloud, "I know no more where your horse is than you do, except that I have been following it all day as well as yourself."

"The long and the short of it is," said the angry jockey, "that you must answer for this before a magistrate, and then, I think, my hearty, it won't be long before they make short work of you," giving a significant chuck under his left ear.

"Why, what's all this about?" said the magistrate, who now entered the room, with a silk handkerchief round his head, and a blanket by way of dressing-gown. "What! Charley Chaffem! what brings you here?"

"Hurrah!" cried Charley; "here's the Clyde magistrate. Now, my beauty, you're booked, and no mistake; You needn't laugh—you'll laugh on the wrong side of your mouth presently. I charge this fellow with stealing my horse," pointing to me viciously; "and I give him into custody."

"What, my friend Thornley! why, what have you got into your head, Charley? Oh!—I see—I see—it was your horse that the rascals stole last night—or I suppose I must call it the night before last, for it's two o'clock in the morning now. We have had a rare hunt after him all day."

“Indeed!” said the jockey, puzzled to understand the meaning of what he heard—“then what t’other chap—beg his pardon, Mr. Thornley—said was true, and you and he have been in pursuit all day of the rascal who made off with my horse? Well! that beats everything! But you might as well have run after the wind as after Roderick! if the rascal knew how to ride him. I think the magistrate knows there’s not a faster horse nor sounder bottom in the colony!”

“The riddle’s out!” said my friend; “I wondered we could not overtake the runaways; we have been hunting the Sandy Bay racer all day! But with your assistance, Charley, I think we may do it now. Do you know this part of the country?”

“Every inch—all over the country, wherever cattle have strayed, or wild horses run. I’ll be bound I know every pass and every ford in the country wherever the foot of white man has been, and more too, for the matter of that. But what’s to be done, sir? Of course, now we are with you, it’s all right; and if you’re taking the matter in hand, we shall be sure to get well out of it?”

“Can we make any progress at night, Charley? What do you think?”

“No use in life, sir, to try to follow tracks in the night; better go at it fresh in the morning.”

“That is my opinion. It is now half-past two; when will there be light enough to follow the track?”

“Not before six o’clock, after breakfast,” said the landlord; “but it’s hardly worth while for you to go to bed again. Shall I get some supper for you all round? There’s capital brandy, and rum, and bottled stout—so that you may pass an hour pleasantly before you start.”

"Do so," said the magistrate; "and we can talk over the matter leisurely. It will take us half an hour to trot to the point of the track from which we broke off, so that we must start at five to be ready to take advantage of the first light."

Upon this we formed a social party round the table, and discussed the likelihood of the fugitives crossing the Macquarie River by the bridge, or by a ford, which was passable, about twelve miles up the stream.

"Bless your heart," said the jockey, "that horse—Roderick—that's his name, sir (to me), Roderick would as easy swim the Macquarie as walk from here to that stable—his rider may go with him anywhere and over anything in nature!"

"I have reasons to think that they would not attempt to swim the Macquarie," said the magistrate, "so that we must make for the ford, if we don't find the trace of him towards the bridge. But I think he can't escape us now, with you, Charley, to help us."

"You know him, then?" said the jockey.

"We think we do, but we are not sure; but there is reason to believe that his object is to get over the country to Launceston as quickly as possible."

"Then his mark is to go by the Jupiter," said the sailor; "she is to sail to-morrow morning, my skipper writes me, and that's why I'm wanted back in such a hurry. I say, master," said he to the jockey, "as you are so knowing about horses, couldn't you do something to my brute? for I'm blessed if I can make anything of him; he steers so wild, I defy the best hand that ever held a tiller to keep him on a wind—one tack or t'other—and when you let him go free, he stands with

his head between his legs, and backs all sail, so that he gets starn-way; how I'm to get to Launceston on him is more than I can tell!"

"I'll tell you how to manage him," said the jockey; "I know him well; he's a Sydney horse, and near twenty years old, and as cunning as a fox. He was bred out of a mare that McCarthy reared at Parramatta; Captain Firebrace brought him over to Hobart Town, and then Parker bought him, and Weston had him afterwards, and Bullfield kept him as a stock-horse, but nobody could make anything of him, and Bullfield swopped him with Spring for thirty ewes heavy with lamb; and he thought he had done Spring nicely; but the biter was bit, for the ewes were all old 'uns, and past their time, and the devil a lamb did they ever have again, for they hadn't got a tooth in the heads of 'em all; and then Spring exchanged him for a pair of working bullocks, and of course they ran into the bush next day, for they were young ones, only put into the yoke for the swop, and it's supposed they are somewhere beyond the lakes towards the Western Coast; and how many hands old Slyboots has been in since then is more than I can say, but I'll tell you how to be up with him."

The receipt for a vicious horse was for that time lost to posterity, for the rapid elattering of hoofs suddenly called off the attention of the jockey, and in half a minute after two horsemen rode up to the door of the inn, whom we immediately recognised as the ingenious Sanders and the phlegmatic Scroggs.

"Ha! Sanders, my buck!" said the jockey, "are you come to join us? And Scroggs!—why, what brings you so far from home, old boy?"

"We are on a secret expedition," said Sanders, with as much dignity as he could assume on a sudden, with a very red face and a very blue nose. "And I see I am come to the right place, taking off his hat to the magistrate, and entering the house. I have been lucky enough sir," he added, "to get horses, as you see, and right good ones they are."

"So they are," chimed in the jockey; "that roan is as good a horse as ever put one leg before the other. Mr. Fallowfield, of the Green Ponds, gave sixty guineas for him, and cheap too. That white horse, that Scroggs was on, has been a racer in his time; and I've seen a hundred and twenty guineas, dollars down, given for him within these eight years; he is getting aged now. Young Oakley gave two pair of working bullocks and a cow heavy with calf for him—and that's as good as forty pounds—the autumn before last; and he's worth all the money, for there's half a dozen years' work in him yet. I'll go and look after them for you. Better give 'em a mash of siftings, for horses are apt to feed greedy at first, and corn does 'em no good, if they arn't cool when they eat it."

"You must make haste with your preparations," said the magistrate, "for it is past three o'clock, and at five we must start."

"It's pushing the horses rather too hard," said the jockey, "but what's the use of them if they can't help you at a pinch? Ah! if I only had Roderick under me, I should like to see the heels of the horse that I couldn't pass in no time!"

At five o'clock we set off, the jockey leading the way. The sailor thought it best to make a start at the same

time, but as his destination was the high road, which he called, "keeping in the stream," we did not wait for him to accomplish the difficult feat of getting aboard his "craft," and we left him, therefore, with one foot in the stirrup and the other hopping on the ground in chase of his cranky steed, which performed an unceasing gyration in resistance to the attempt to mount him. The last words that we heard of the enraged sailor were "D'—, that is, bless—no, I won't be balked this time—I say, damn him!"

"You followed 'em to the valley between the two banks of mimosas, by a sugar-loaf hill, didn't you say?" said the jockey, after we had gone about four miles. "Then this must be near the spot where you turned off. Let us walk leisurely, if you please, sir; no need to go over more ground than necessary. About here, was it? You are right; here are your tracks, see! There's the track of Mr. Thornley's horse—he throws out the right fore-leg as he trots, a leetle more than the left; and there's the track of Roderick. Look at his stride; any one may tell that stride from a hundred; and there's the print of the jackass shoe that I was obliged to put on him, poor fellow, for I had no other at hand; but I little thought anybody could be such a brute as to make him gallop in it. You see he don't like it, for he just favours that leg the least bit in the world. No one else would observe it, but I know his ways. Now, gentlemen, if you are of a mind to push on, I'll engage to keep on Roderick's track. Pretty country this, for a pack of hounds. What a glorious run you may give a horse on Salt-pan Plains. There's nothing to stop you one way for twenty miles."

The track now led us over Blackman's Bridge.

"Oh, ho!" said the jockey; "I see the rascal shies the water; he prefers the bridge; now, I think, we shall have him."

But, contrary to our expectation, the track led us some miles to the left, to a ruined hut, where it seemed the fugitives had passed the night; for there were marks of a fire having been kindled the night before, and the hearth still retained some heat.

"Stole away!" said Chaffem; "but the form is still warm, and puss can't be far off. The rascal has got the start though, and Roderick is not the horse to lose his ground."

We left the hut, and followed the track in the direction of Ross Bridge, on the Macquarie River; but here it seemed the fugitives had misgivings of the prudence of proceeding on the highway, for within half a mile of the bridge they crossed the road, and made a circuit to the right.

"They don't like to chance the bridge," said the constable. "Now, if their point is Launceston, they must either swim the river or make for the ford. There is one higher up the stream, but it's a long round; do you know it, Charley?"

"Know it! ay, and many's the time I've crossed it; and Roderick knows it, too; but they'll never go all that way round; they'll take to the water, you'll see, when we come to the bend."

But in this the jockey was mistaken, for we passed the bend, and the tracks continued to a spot about half a mile from the ford, near which there was a clump of mimosas standing apart on the plain, and at a short dis-

tance from a forest of thickly-growing trees. At this place they had evidently made a halt, for the ground was trampled down within a small circumscribed space, as if they had been hiding there for a time. We did not wait to examine it further, but pushed on in the direction of the ford. But here a sight met our eyes that explained the cause of the halt, and the hiding of the fugitives. The quick-eyed Sanders was the first to detect the traces of numerous naked feet.

"Pull up!" he cried out—"pull up for a minute. Look, sir, the natives have been prowling about here. Look to the right there. Don't press the marks—let us see how many of the black fellows have been together."

We drew up on the margin of the tracks of the natives, which were in the direction of the ford, and it seemed as if there had been about twenty of them, to judge from the confused prints of their naked feet."

"I'll bet a guinea," said Sanders, "this is what made 'em hide up for awhile among those mimosas. They saw the natives between them and the ford, and they feared to face them."

"Keep on," said the magistrate, "their tracks lead to the ford—and I think I see some object on the bank of the river."

He was right; a few minutes' trot brought us to the ford, and by the side of the stream was lying a man in a fustian dress, whose countenance I thought I remembered. On examining him more closely, I recognised the face of the man in the yellow jacket whom I had met on the jetty in Hobart Town, and who was one of those who attacked and overpowered me in the red-house. In two words I told this to the magistrate.

The poor wretch was still alive, but his appearance told the tale of his miserable fate. His skull was pounded in by the waddies of the natives, and his body was pierced in many places by their thin and pointed spears.

"If we could only get him to speak now," said the constable, "he might give us some useful information. Scroggs, where's your bottle?"

Upon this the provident Scroggs produced a pint bottle of rum—a sovereign remedy, in his opinion, for all disorders.

"What's the use of giving him rum, if he's dead?" remonstrated Scroggs; "it's only wasting it that way."

"He's not dead," said Sanders, "though it won't be long first, seemingly. Let us try to make him speak; he may be able to tell us of the other one. It's Bill Simmons, one of the biggest rascals in the whole colony, but that's no matter now. Give us the bottle."

He raised up the expiring wretch, and Sanders poured down his throat a portion of the rum, while the magistrate dashed some cold water from the river over his head and face. For a considerable time the man gave no other signs of life than a faint breathing, and it was not until after the lapse of two hours, which seemed to us two ages, that he was able to articulate.

"We are losing time sadly," exclaimed the impatient jockey, "and what has become of poor Roderick all this time? Entangled, perhaps, with the reins, and his head kept down, and drowned in the river! That's dreadful!"

"Hush!" said the magistrate, "the man is going to speak."

"They have got the child," murmured out the dying man.

"Who have got the child?"

"The natives—they—attacked—me in—the ford."

"And your companion, where is he?"

"I saw him swimming in the river—but—in his haste—he abandoned—the child—to save himself—and the natives took the child—the Gypsey—the Gypsey—the Gypsey's child?"

"Did the natives kill the child?" asked I, full of anxious horror at the probable fate of the poor girl.

"They—have—killed—me. Their waddies—my head—spears—child.carried off."

"How long ago is it," asked the magistrate, "since they attacked you?"

"I don't know—it—was—just—at—daybreak. I—didn't—like to pass the bridge—so—I made for the ford—and the natives—attacked us—and they have taken the—child. . . ."

"What's o'clock?" asked Sanders.

"Half past ten," said I.

"Then the natives have got the start of us by about four hours and a half," resumed the constable; "and if they have taken to the hills, it will be a difficult job to follow them on horseback."

"We can easily track them in the snow," observed the magistrate.

"While the snow lasts," replied the constable; "but, by the look of Ben Lomond, we shall have a change of weather, and there's a northerly wind this morning, and that, with the sun, will soon melt this snow. Following the natives in the bush is no easy matter. A white

man might as well try to track a bird as a native in the bush !”

“ I shall go after them,” said the magistrate ; “ what do you say, Thornley—shall we leave this little girl to the mercy of the savages ?”

“ I’m ready to go with you,” said I, “ but let us go prepared ; this is a bad time of the year for bushing it. Is there no place near here, Sanders, where we could borrow some kangaroo-rugs, and get a supply of provisions ?”

“ I have it !” said Sanders ; “ Mark’s sheep-run is not more than two miles from the ford, and if he will let one of his shepherds, Black Tom, go with us—he’s a Sydney native—we’ll set a black fellow to hunt black fellows, and come over them that way.”

“ Come on, then,” said the magistrate, “ and lose no time. I will go with you to remove any objection. Stay ! the dying man is going to speak again. I think he understood what we were saying. What is it, my man ?” he added, in a soothing tone to the dying man ; “ what have you got to say ?”

“ Mus - - - quee - - to !” said the man, with his last breath.

“ Musqueto !” said Sanders, “ then there’s no time to be lost ; that’s the cruelest savage that ever tormented a colony ; he kills for killing sake, without reason.”

“ I have had a taste of him,” said the magistrate.

“ And so have I,” said I.

“ There’s no time to be lost, if we are to save the child.”

The magistrate, guided by Sanders, immediately galloped off ; and in less time than we expected, they re-

turned at a brisk pace, laden with kangaroo-rugs, and various necessities for a bush expedition, and followed by Tom, a fine tall native of the continental island of Australia, dressed with much neatness, in a cloth jacket and trousers of good texture; the civilized natives soon catching the colonial predilection for cloth of a superior quality.

"And what's to become of me?" said the disconsolate jockey; "and what has become of Roderick? I say, friend, didn't you say your rascally companion crossed the ford? He's as dead as a door nail! There's no getting any more out of him; it serves him right for making off with poor Roderick! I never knew a horse-stealer to come to a good end! But I'll be after him! Good day, gentlemen; I wish you luck. Take care of your horses, and let them take their time up those terrible hills. I'll go after Roderick!"

And so saying, the jockey plunged his horse into the stream, and we turned our attention to the object of our expedition.

"Will not the native, being on foot, retard us?" inquired I; "he can never keep up with our horses."

"Never fear," said Sanders; "if our horses can keep up with him we shall do very well. Now, Tom, my boy, are you ready?"

Tom nodded his head.

"Which way are you going to take us?" Tom looked at the tracks, among which the prints of tiny feet were plainly discernible, and pointed to the hills.

"Now," said the magistrate, "for another adventure. I never had a hunt after natives before. Not the best of weather for lying out at night's;—but it

would never do to leave that little girl to be butchered by Musqueeto!"

We moved on at a good pace, Tom, with his long legs, keeping our horses just beyond a quick walk, and we were soon buried in the deep recesses of the woods.

Chapter Thirty-Fifth.

Winter in Van Diemen's Land—The Pursuit of the Black Fellows
—Native Habitations—News of the Child.

THE dense mass of spreading branches, with their winter leaves of sombre green, which formed a canopy high above our heads, had allowed but little snow to fall on the forest ground; but there were ample signs of the natives to enable the sagacious Sydney black to guide us through the intricacies of the tall straight stems of the stringy-bark trees, with their ragged, shreddy coats, without hesitation. Ever and anon he would turn round to us, without discontinuing his course, and displaying, with a self-satisfied grin, his formidable rows of ivory teeth, he would point to the track, and seek, with his piercing and restless black eyes, deep set in his woolly head, for our approbation of his sagacity.

It occupied us nearly two hours to pass through the forest, and we then emerged into an ample plain nearly clear of trees, resembling a vast park. The noonday sun had melted nearly all the snow, and it was only here and there, under the shade of some gigantic gum-tree, or umbrageous mimosa, that any signs of it were visible. We were glad to get rid of the snow, as, under the guidance of the black, we had no fear of losing the tracks of the natives, and we pushed on without stopping for nearly twenty miles, in a south-easterly direction, over a

fine country of undulating hill and plain, till we came to the foot of a tier of low hills, on which were scattered a few of the trees of the she oak. These trees present a scraggy appearance to the eye, but their wood is much prized as fuel, from its pleasing fragrance and good qualities for burning. It is not easy to get a plank from these trees of more than six or eight inches in width, but, when polished, it is admirably adapted for ornamental furniture. Here we made a pause to rest our horses, which we tethered out by the hide ropes, which we carried with us on the front of our saddles, giving them the range of a circle of about eighty feet in diameter, to feed on the native grass, shifting them occasionally as their food grew scanty. The constables kindled a fire, and proceeded with the usual arrangements for a bush meal.

They put a handful of black tea into the kettle, which Scroggs bore in his portion of the luggage, and set it on to boil—tea forming the favourite beverage of settlers of every degree in their bush expeditions. The dexterous black, who carried a long-shanked, narrow axe, quickly sliced from an adjacent gum-tree some pieces of bark, which formed extempore plates and dishes, and some steaks of young beef being duly broiled, aided by one of the dampers, which formed part of our provisions, we made, with the relish of hunger, a satisfactory repast. The constables then got up a second edition of the feast, with some additional supplies, for Black Tom, not liking to remain idle during our banquet, had contrived to catch three kangaroo-rats and a bandicoot, which he disembowelled with much delicacy, and threw them in their furry coats on some clear embers of the fire. Scroggs produced from the recesses of a mysterious garment a

bottle of rum, but it was unanimously decided that this luxury should be reserved as a medicine for special occasions. Much to the disappointment of the thirsty individual, therefore, the cork remained undrawn, and the disconsolate Scroggs was obliged to solace himself with a pannikin of hot tea from the boiling kettle. Our rough repast ended, we proceeded on our way, till the sinking of the sun behind the snow-topped mountains to the west, warned us to turn our attention to the means of passing the night; for the nights in the winter season in Van Diemen's Land are too cold to allow of their being passed with impunity in the open air. As we felt the fullest confidence of coming up with the natives, we did not push our horses to the extreme, for we knew that Musqueeto and his mob would not travel many days without making a stop in some locality favourable for the collection of gum, and the resort of opossums. We had but one axe among us, but there were more than one who knew well how to use it, the cleverest of whom was the Sydney black; so that, in a short time, they managed to erect two bush-huts well covered in with heavy branches. The opening of the huts being next to the fire, which was kept up all night, we contrived, with the aid of our warm kangaroo-rugs, to pass the night without inconvenience.

Towards the early morning, the air became frosty, and the next day, under a clear sky and a brilliant sun, we continued our pursuit of the natives. At noon the air became mild and warm, and if it had not been for our apprehensions of the calamitous fate of the child to whose rescue we were hastening, we should have enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the almost unexplored country

through which we travelled; but a second day and night having passed without coming up with the natives, our uneasiness increased to a pitch of painful anxiety. We could discover no trace of the little foot, nor indeed could our less acute sense of sight detect any marks of the retiring natives, although, to the black's stronger and more sensitive organs, the marks were so plain as to cause him no apparent trouble to pursue. We consoled ourselves, however, with the reflection, that the absence of any mark of the child's foot which Tom could not trace, might be accounted for by her having been carried in the arms of the natives, though what could be their object, or the object of Musqueeto in bearing her away, we were at a loss to conjecture, and we feared the worst.

With these doubts and fears, we passed an uneasy night; the more so as our provisions being nearly exhausted, we could not keep up the animal strength to counteract the depression of the spirits. Under circumstances so favourable for the opening of the grog-bottle, the longing Scroggs made several insinuating attempts to get our assent to that measure, but it was steadily resisted, and with a stoicism on the part of his reflecting coadjutor which I particularly admired.

"Cold work this!" said Scroggs to Sanders; "and cold water is poor stuff to put heart into a man. A fire is very well to warm the outside, but the inside is the place to keep up the heat; then it spreads all over one in a glow! It's surprising how small a quantity of spirit—a single glass or so—I've often tried it—will warm a man's whole body, to the very tips of one's fingers!"

"To the tip of your nose, you ought to say, old buck," rejoined his mate, "for you have put that sponge of

yours into such a glow some time, that it has never got cool again."

"None of your nonsense;—it's all owing to smoking out of a short pipe; I went to sleep with it one night in my mouth, and I slept so sound, though I had drunk nothing to speak of, that the end of my nose got briled on the bowl of the pipe before I woke up."

"I wish you had thought to bring two bottles, instead of one," said Sanders, "then you might have soaked your nose in one and kept the other. But you don't know what may happen in the bush, and a sup of rum may save a man's life. Better keep it till it's wanted."

"But it is wanted," persisted the persevering Scroggs; "I declare I feel so queer I don't know what to make of it; and that bit of opossum that I was fool enough to eat makes me smell all turpentine. What harm could it do," he added, in a melancholy tone, "if I took only the least sip in the world—just a taste—only a smell at the bottle?"

But Sanders was firm, and as Scroggs stood too much in awe of the magistrate to venture on so flagrant a breach of duty as a burglary on the rum-bottle, he betook himself sadly to bed, and covering himself up in his kangaroo-rug, after a few dolorous moanings, the sounds which proceeded from his fiery nose proclaimed that he was sound asleep.

The next morning found us much less fresh than the preceding one, and no one seemed inclined for conversation, our spirits being damped by the unsuccessful pursuit, and by the contemplation of the uncertain distance to which we might be led in our chase, and of the uncertain time which might be consumed in it. We had

bivouacked at the base of a tier of hills, and it was not without anxiety that we shared the remainder of our provisions, and prepared for the steep ascent before us.

We had not proceeded far, however, when, on some moist ground beneath a spring, which trickled down the hill, Black Tom pointed out to us the fresh mark of a native foot. We were leading our horses up the ascent, and it was with lively curiosity that we regarded the sign of the probable propinquity of the natives. We immediately looked to our arms, wiped our flints, renewed our primings, and examined our barrels, to see that the charges had not become loosened in the journey. The prospect of danger spread animation among the party, mixed with some anxiety, for we had by this time penetrated into a part of the country never, perhaps, trodden before by a white man's foot, and far removed from all assistance. We advanced, therefore, with great precaution till we got close to the summit of the hill, when the magistrate directed us to stand still, and motioned the black to reconnoitre.

Tom advanced cautiously and silently upwards, crawling on his belly, and winding his way like a snake over the tufts of grass, till he was enabled to project his black poll—hardly to be distinguished from the rough logs of charred timber that lay about over the ridge of the hill. For some seconds he remained motionless, and then withdrawing himself by imperceptible degrees from his place of observation, he communicated to us the result of his discovery.

"Black fellows in bottom," said Tom, softly; "Mus-queeto with 'em."

"What are they doing?" asked the constable.

“ Make fire—and eat.”

“ Is the piccaninny with them ?” said I.

“ Can’t see. Go behind trees, there,” continued Tom, pointing to the right, “ then you see all.”

On the right was a clump of bushes, to which we bent our steps.

Leaving our horses under the charge of the constables, we edged round the declivity of the hill and crept up to the top, where we stationed ourselves behind the bushes. From this position we observed the natives in the hollow below. They had evidently arrived at a spot at which they proposed to sojourn for a while, for they had raised up in two or three places, and with more than usual care, break-winds formed of branches of trees, and lined with wide strips of bark. These rude protections from the wind were about four feet high, and we remarked that one apart from the rest had the distinction of an attempt at a roof, but of dimensions not more than sufficient to contain a single person. Large fires were lighted before the break-winds, at which some of the natives reclined ; others were standing listlessly here and there, and some of the women were engaged in tending their children. Almost the whole party was naked ; but one man, whom by his stature and bearing we recognised as Musqueeto, was distinguished by a black hat, with waistcoat and trousers, and one or two of the women had something which looked like old and dirty blankets thrown over their shoulders. We remained for some time watching them from our hiding-place, but we could observe no signs of the child whom we had come so far to rescue ; and we had sad misgivings of her safety. Having made all the observations in our power,



THE NATIVES CARRYING OFF THE GIPSY'S DAUGHTER.

TABLE I	
Summary of the results of the experiments	
Experiment	Results
1. Effect of temperature on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing temperature.
2. Effect of concentration on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing concentration.
3. Effect of catalyst on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with the addition of a catalyst.
4. Effect of surface area on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing surface area.
5. Effect of pressure on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing pressure.
6. Effect of solvent on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with the use of a polar solvent.
7. Effect of pH on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing pH.
8. Effect of ionic strength on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing ionic strength.
9. Effect of dielectric constant on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with increasing dielectric constant.
10. Effect of viscosity on the rate of reaction	The rate of reaction increases with decreasing viscosity.

we retreated back to the brow of the hill, and consulted together as to the best course to pursue.

"If you would be pleased to take my advice, sir," said Sanders, "I would wait till night, when the natives are afraid to move about, and then, by advancing two together, we might take them by surprise, and the first thing would be to shoot down Musqueeto, and the men of the party, and then if they run away with the child—that is, if they haven't murdered it already, which I think most likely—we can pursue them with our horses, for they're terribly afraid of a horse; they think it bites, and fights with its fore-legs."

"I confess," said the magistrate, "I am very much disappointed not to see the little girl; our object is to release her, not to slaughter these naked savages. Did you ever know them to eat a white person? Let us find out from Tom; do you speak to him, Sanders; he knows you, and would tell you perhaps more freely than us."

"Tom," said Sanders, "black fellow eat white piccaninny?"

Tom looked suspiciously at the constable with his deep-set, restless eyes, one of the characteristics of the natives of Australia, and seemed unwilling to reply; for the Sydney blacks, as well as the few who have communication with the settlements of Van Diemen's Land, are well aware of the horror of the whites at the practice of eating human flesh.

"Tom never eat man," said Sanders, coaxingly, "no—never; but bad black fellow eat man, and eat piccaninny, sometimes?"

"Bad black fellow eat man, sometimes," replied

Tom, "while he very angry, and fight;—me never eat man."

"No, not you; but black man eat white man, sometimes?"

"Yees."

"And eat white piccaninny, sometimes; bad black fellow?"

"Yees—bad black fellow."

"The nasty inhuman savages!" exclaimed Scroggs, who was within hearing, holding the horses. "To think of that poor little gal being eat by those black devils, just as if she was mutton or beef! Here, Sanders, come and put your hand in my pocket, and take out the bottle of rum;—take it, I say! I, for one, will give it up, and let the natives have it for the child. I should like just to have one sup of it before it goes; but never mind, I'll give it all, rather than the child should be eat up by those black rascals!"

"Well done, Scroggs," said the magistrate; "depend upon it this generous instance of self-denial shall not be forgotten, for I know the effort which it must have cost you; but I think we can manage without putting your virtue to so severe a trial. Tom," said he to our guide, "will you go and try if you can see a little white piccaninny among the black fellows? Piccaninny so high," describing the height of a child of six or seven years of age.

Tom understood what was said to him in English much more easily than he could find words to reply. He comprehended the magistrate in a moment, and looking on the ground for a while in a thoughtful attitude,—

"Me go," said he.

Without further talk, for the natives are remarkably taciturn and sententious among themselves, as well as among the whites, Tom proceeded to strip himself of the encumbrance of his clothes, even to his shoes and stockings, and displayed himself in the natural undisguise of our great progenitor, Adam, about whose colour there is, among many of the nations of the earth, a difference of opinion; but as the subject is foreign to the nature of these humble memoirs, I shall not enter into that vexatious question. The disencumbered Tom formed his plan on the instant, and taking a wide circuit to the left, he was soon lost to view, leaving us in a state of anxious and nervous expectation.

After the lapse of an hour he returned, and in the cold apathetic manner of the natives, he communicated his information with his usual sententious brevity:—

“White piccaninny with black fellows.”

“That’s capital,” said the magistrate; “the poor little thing is alive, at any rate. How does she look, Tom?”

But Tom did not understand this question, and seeing that an answer was expected, he replied,—

“Piccaninny in little house,”—describing by gesture the single break-wind which we had observed from behind the bushes.

“What are they going to do with the piccaninny?” said I.

“Eat her, I’ll be bound,” said Scroggs; “that’s what they are going to do with her; and they are fattening her up in that pen as we do a lamb, till she’s in good condition. The black villains! Let us march right at ’em and shoot ’em down, every one. I’m ready for it!”

“There is something in this,” observed the magistrate,

“which I cannot understand. It is difficult sometimes to penetrate into the motives of savages; but as they seem at present to be in a peaceful humour, I think our best plan is to send on Tom a little in advance to parley with them, and to assure them that we have no hostile intentions. We can follow immediately behind him on horseback, with our arms ready, in case of their showing fight; but as we shall take them by surprise, I think it very likely that they will not attempt any resistance. You all know that it is the particular desire of the Colonial Government, which is conformable, indeed, with sound policy and with humanity, never to commit an aggression on the natives uselessly and without the most pressing necessity; but on all occasions to treat them with benevolence and tenderness, and to endeavour to win them over by acts of kindness, instead of alienating them by the wanton or thoughtless exercise of superior power.”

“If you please, sir,” said Sanders, “Musqueeto has committed more than one murder, and he’s a Sydney black, and ought to know better. We have orders from Camp to endeavour to take him if we should have the opportunity.”

“We shall act according to circumstances,” replied the magistrate. “At present, our object is to rescue the child from the clutches of the savages; and, in doing that, we must endeavour to avoid shedding blood.”

I agreed with the magistrate in the propriety of his mode of action, and although I had a strong presentiment that there would be a murderous conflict, I relied on the superiority of our arms and our horses, and had little doubt of the result.

We descended the hill, therefore, and forming ourselves into the order laid down by our leader, we moved round the hill to the right, that we might reach the level ground before we should be perceived by the natives, and, advancing at a moderate pace, we soon found ourselves in front of their curious habitations

Chapter Fortieth.

A Native Encampment—Conference with Musqueeto—A Savage has a Soul—The lost Child recovered—How to catch an Opossum—A Kangaroo hunt by the Natives—The Apparition of Spears and Waddies excites disagreeable suspicions.

THE Sydney black preceded us about twenty yards in advance, and as soon as he arrived within easy speaking distance of the natives, we pulled up, and with much anxiety waited for the issue of his conference. He had previously resumed his clothes, but it was easy for the natives to perceive by his colour and his features that he was allied to their general race. To our extreme surprise—although the aborigines of Van Diemen's Land have a strong antipathy to the natives of the continental island—our messenger was allowed to approach their fires without exciting the slightest visible sensation. Their simulated unconcern might have been produced, perhaps, by the sight of our party on horseback; but the strangeness of this unexpected apathy, on the part of Musqueeto and his companions, made us fear some treachery, and we looked round to try if we could perceive any appearance of an ambuscade; but we could detect nothing to excite suspicion. I have often had occasion to observe the dull, listless, and almost idiotic appearance of the natives of Van Diemen's Land, when not excited by hunger or some passionate desire. It has struck me that in this respect they much resemble the

unthinking beasts of the fields, so inanimate and log-like in their usual manner. The women will sometimes chatter a little, for it seems nature makes them all alike as to that matter, but the men have the most reserved and taciturn habit of any race of savages that I have known or read of. The strange contrast of their silence and immobility, with the yells and wildness for which we were prepared, filled us with a vague sort of superstitious fear, which was heightened by the chilly stillness of the vast wilderness in which we were now enclosed.

In the mean time a monosyllabic "corrobara" had taken place between our guide and the chief of the sable community, the meaning of which Tom concentrated in the following brief communication:—

"Musqueeto say, you come."

"Why, what is the meaning of this?" said the magistrate. "They don't show any signs of fear, nor do they look as if they thought of fighting! Is there some stratagem in this? what do you think of it, Thornley?"

"Upon my word," I replied, "this takes me so much by surprise, I don't know what to think of it. Sanders, you know their ways, do you see any of their waddies or spears about?"

"One can never tell, sir," said Sanders, "what those treacherous savages are at; they're always hatching some deviltry or other. You see, sir, I take it, we have come on one of their places for encamping, if you can call those bits of break-winds camps. But Musqueeto can be civil enough, sometimes. Seroggs, you've often come across Musqueeto, what is he after now?"

"He's always after some wickedness," responded

Scroggs! "but I think the natives are going to have a feast. Don't you see that string of opossums yonder, by the blue gum-tree? and there's something hanging up inside the bushes;—the Lord have mercy on us, it must be the child! and the black devils are going to cook it for their dinner!"

"The child!" exclaimed the magistrate; "no, impossible!—Tom saw the child alive a quarter of an hour ago! Go, Tom, ask Musqueeto if he has got the white man's piccaninny."

Tom made the inquiry, accordingly, and presently returned with a reply.

"Musqueeto say, white man kill piccaninny; Musqueeto kill white man. Piccauinny in piccaninny house—there."

"This is very extraordinary," said the magistrate; "the most extraordinary thing that has occurred to me in all my adventures in the colony. What can be Musqueeto's object in this? However, as they seem quietly disposed, let us advance close to them, and try to get possession of the poor child by peaceable means."

"Better let two of us stand on guard, in case of any attack," suggested the constable; "no need, sir, for us all to be sacrificed."

"That's a very prudent precaution, Sanders; do you and Scroggs remain here in charge of the horses, and I and Mr. Thornley will go to them on foot—that is, if Mr. Thornley has no objection."

"None in the least," said I; "the best way with savages, and all animals in general, is to show that you have no fear of them."

"Better take my bottle of rum," suggested Scroggs,

in the exuberance of his generosity ; "let Musqueeto have a sup at it, and perhaps that will put him in good humour."

"No, no," said the magistrate, "keep the rum till we want it. A savage is awkward enough to deal with when he is sober, but, with a little rum in him he is worse than a madman. Now, Thornley, let us go among them boldly."

Accordingly we went up to Musqueeto, who was standing by one of the fires in front of the little wigwam in which we had been given to understand the little girl of whom we were in search, was secreted. He had, I thought, the same stupid and sullen look which I had remarked on other occasions, as he stood in the listless and dozing attitude which was usual with him when not engaged in any hunting or predatory expedition. A close investigation, however, might detect in his half-shut, but ever restless eyes, a watchfulness that allowed nothing to escape his observation. I confess it was not without a little nervous apprehension, and some slight bumping in the region of my left side, that I approached the formidable savage in his lair. He raised up his eyes and glanced at us, but gave no sign of recognition, or of being affected by our presence.

We remained for a brief space in this unpleasant position, with the awkward feeling of having intruded on a gentleman's privacy without an invitation. Neither of us spoke—my friend being under the same difficulty as myself to hit upon an appropriate topic by which to commence a conversation with this chief of a band of savages, and the usual salutation of a "very fine day," seeming to me, under the circumstances, inappropriate

to the individual and the occasion; but I was relieved by the magistrate breaking silence.

“Much kangaroo, Musqueeto, in this part of the country?”

“Boomah—there,” replied Musqueeto, pointing out an immense kangaroo in the bushes, which had attracted the attention of the horrified Scroggs.

My excellent friend presuming, I suppose, that eating and drinking among friends facilitated conversation, and being stimulated besides by certain internal promptings that his fast had continued for more than a reasonable time, immediately intimated to his new acquaintance his inclination for a steak.

Musqueeto uttered a few words to one of his retinue, and without further ceremony, some pieces of the kangaroo were brought to us; we motioned to them to put the venison on the fire, which they did with a readiness to oblige which inspired us with some confidence in their present sincerity.

When the meat was cooked, we sat down on the ground, on which Musqueeto also squatted down opposite. Some of his companions stood at a little distance, eyeing us with much curiosity, but without rudeness; and in this way, with a charming absence of all ceremony, we partook of a sociable meal with our new acquaintance, but in perfect silence.

Thinking the occasion favourable, I suggested to my friend the expediency of propitiating our host by a glass of rum, as an appropriate introduction to the object of our journey. The magistrate agreed with me, and called quietly to Scroggs to bring the bottle and a pannikin.

I observed that Musqueeto gave a flash of his eye at

the magistrate's call, and gathered up his legs under him, ready for a spring, upon which I instantly called to Seroggs,

"Show the bottle of rum!"

Seroggs raised on high his long-cherished bottle, at the view of which, I saw that Musqueeto's eyes resumed their usual expression, and he quietly returned to his former position of repose. Meanwhile the disappointed Seroggs, with his mouth watering at the sight of a repast in which he did not share, and his eyes becoming tearful at the prospect of the total consumption of his beloved rum, approached with slow and reluctant steps to resign his treasure.

"These savages, sir," said he, in an insinuating way, to the magistrate, "are very suspicious—very. If you like, sir, I will taste a little of the rum first—that he may see it is all right, and that we mean no harm to him. Allow me to take out the cork?"

"Make haste back," said the magistrate, "and mount your horse, that you may be ready to act in case of need. This rum may be of service to us, and we don't want it for our own drinking; we can get plenty more when we go home."

So saying, my friend took summary possession of the bottle, which the disconsolate Seroggs relinquished with a pitiable sigh, and the salt and savour of life having now departed from him, he resumed his seat lugubriously on the back of his horse with his hapless body, leaving his soul behind him in the bottle.

The magistrate poured into the pannikin a portion of the rum with the same seriousness with which it might be supposed he would have offered a libation to the in-

fernal gods, and proffering it to the presiding deity of the spot, that condescending personage turned it down with an off-handed dexterity which would have done honour to an inhabitant of the far-famed St. Giles in the mother country, and with gusto which overcame the habitual reserve of a native. He evinced his delectation at the imbibing of the liquor by a grim smile, which made me involuntarily grasp my fowling-piece a little closer, and slapping his breast he held out the pan-ikin for a fresh supply. But we thought this a fit opportunity to enter into some sort of treaty for the restoration of the child.

“Musqueeto kill white man?” said the magistrate; “why Musqueeto kill white man?”

“White man great rascal,” replied Musqueeto, “try kill piccaninny—Musqueeto kill him.”

“Why Musqueeto take piccaninny?” pursued my friend; “Musqueeto want to keep piccaninny and make her gin to black man?”

Musqueeto shook his head, and it seemed to me if he had known how he would have laughed at this inquiry.

“Piccaninny white!” said he; “not good for black man.”

“Why take piccaninny?” persisted my friend; “why save her from bad white man?”

It seemed that Musqueeto suddenly understood what the magistrate was driving at, for his countenance assumed an appearance almost of intelligence, and he immediately replied:—

“Gypsey’s piccaninny; Gypsey die; Gypsey good to Musqueeto—he Musqueeto’s brother; Musqueeto not let bad white man kill Gypsey’s piccaninny.”

My friend and I gazed at each other with astonishment at these words, and reading each other's thoughts, we could not but admire the strange concatenation of events which had preserved the life of the bush-ranger's daughter from such imminent perils! But as I had been constituted guardian of that deceased character's child, I considered that there was a means of easy understanding if I could make the native comprehend the nature of my legal and social position in respect to his temporary ward.

"Gypsy," said I, "Musqueto's brother."

"Gypsy, Musqueto's brother," repeated the black chief.

Thought I to myself the Gypsy's family would not consider themselves very much flattered by this unexpected claim on their relationship by my black friend here, but at any rate he has done one good action to atone for his multitude of crimes, and so I will not flinch from claiming my right to be considered as a member of the family.

"Musqueto," said I, "you know me?" He had been more than once at my house with his mob, and had been regaled with damper and boiling hot tea plentifully sweetened with brown sugar, not forgetting an occasional glass of rum.

"You Mister Thornley?" said Musqueto.

"Yes," said I; "and I Gypsy's brother!"

Musqueto gave me a quick look, which none but a savage could give, in which was expressed the blended wonder and suspicion which my assumption of relationship with the Gypsy had excited, and I continued—

"Gypsy Musqueto's brother; Gypsy Thornley's brother; Thornley Musqueto's brother."

I wished to lead the savage, by this ingenious process of ratiocination, as my friend the magistrate called it in his jocose way, to consider me as an intimate friend and relation, for my object was to get possession of the child, with his concurrence, so as to avoid bloodshed. Musqueeto mused, I observed, for a while, on these words, and then, with the caution of the savage, he asked—

“Why you Gypsey’s brother?”

“The Gypsey,” said I, “when bad white man kill him, say to me—‘Give bread and meat to my piccanniny—little, so big’”—said I, describing the size of a child of six or seven years of age. “I say to Gypsey, Thornley Gypsey’s brother.”

Musqueeto rose from his sitting position when I had said this, and spoke to one of his people, who disappeared, and presently returned with a tall and slender young lady of a bright black colour, who, from her air and pretensions we immediately concluded was the favourite gin of the grim Musqueeto. A soldier’s old jacket, without buttons, and which, with a graceful negligence remained open in front, formed an airy spencer suitable for summer or for winter wear, and a red cotton handkerchief tied around her woolly black poll gave her a superior air, which distinguished her from her less favoured associates of the seraglio. No other article of dress than that of which we have made modest mention, prevented the free exercise of her supple and well-formed limbs. As an honest historian I am obliged to record that her nose was very broad and very flat, but her eyes were large and bright. Various coquettish devices, depicted in a mixture of resinous gum and red ochre,

formed a striking relief to the monotonous hue of her sable skin, and a fish-bone, stuck through her nose, added a finish to the splendour of her personal appearance.

To this amiable divinity Musqueeto gave some brief directions, and the lady, retiring, quickly re-appeared, leading by the hand the timid and shrinking form of the Gypsy's daughter. I have often thought that when her fancy recalls, in after life, the romantic scenes of her early youth, the recollection of this memorable day must form a curious contrast with her present fortunes. She raised up her large black eyes, which instantly reminded me of the last wild look of the Gypsy bushranger, and sought among us for some familiar face; but meeting only with the countenances of strangers, she cast them down again in disappointment and sadness, as if doubtful whether to regard the white strangers as friends or foes.

"Georgiana," said I, softly.

The little thing started at the secret name, and clasping her tiny hand, she stood with one foot advanced, trembling and irresolute, while she searched me with her lustrous eyes, to discover in me some trace of a former friend.

I think I never saw so beautiful a child; she was the very picture of loveliness, and possessed that indefinable and irresistible charm with which infancy and innocence never fail to move the coldest human heart. Struck with the desolate condition of the child, and possessed with the sacred nature of the trust that I had taken on me, I held out my arms, and said to her in tones which touched her little heart—

"Come to me, my poor little orphan girl; you shall be a daughter among my children, and I will be a friend and a father to you."

The child screamed with sudden joy; bursting into tears she bounded into my arms, and with passionate sobs hid her little face in my bosom.

The very savages were affected by the scene. The women gathered round us, gazing with earnest interest, and the harsher lineaments of the faces of the men became softened at the touch of nature, which makes the whole world kin.

"Look out, sir!" cried Sanders, who with Scroggs had approached in this moment of excitement close to the mingled group; "Take care, they don't take you at a disadvantage. You never know when to trust a native."

"You've dropped the bottle," whined Scroggs; "there it is under your legs, and in another moment it will be broken, and all the rum will be lost."

"And now," said the magistrate to me, "let us get back to some place of settlement without loss of time, while we are all in good humour. We can easily carry the child with us on horseback. Now, my men," he continued to the constables, "keep your eyes about you; home's the word."

"I've had no dinner," said Scroggs, with a woeful face. "I declare I feel as if my two sides would come together, I'm so empty. I've taken in my handkerchief round my middle twice; the next tie I shall come quite in two."

"It will not do," said I, "to attempt going back without a supply of provisions; and we have no dogs

with us to pull a kangaroo. That was a sad mistake; you should never go into the bush without kangaroo dogs; they are at once sentinels and purveyors."

"Let us try the natives," said the magistrate; "perhaps they can help us to some provisions."

"Musqueeto, can you get some kangaroo for us?"

"Kangaroo? Yees."

He gave some directions to his followers, who entered into the project with much alacrity, and they immediately commenced their preparations, sharpening up their spears and getting ready their waddies.

It is remarkable that the natives of Van Diemen's Land, like the natives of the Continental Island, have not invented the bow and arrow, although they have more than one sort of wood well adapted, from its toughness and its straightness, for both purposes. The long and tough sinews of the kangaroo are well fitted for bow-strings, and the Van Diemen's Land natives have contrived to fabricate from the fibres of the bark of a tree, to which the name of stringy-bark tree has been given by the settlers, a sort of rough net in which they deposit the edible gum which they collect in their journeys; but they have not applied the sinews of the kangaroo to the uses which might easily be made of them. Their only weapons are the spear and the waddy, and the crescent-shaped womera which they hurl at their enemies in battle, and at the kangaroo in hunting.

The women understanding that we wanted meat for the piccaninny, one of them approached us with a small axe made of sharpened stone, in her hand, and laughing and smiling, and using an abundance of words, which we could not understand, invited us by jestures, to wit-

ness her operations. We accompanied her accordingly; the constables, to whom we had distributed the remainder of our kangaroo dinner, still remaining on guard, with the difference only, that we thought they might venture to tether out our horses in a nook where there was a tolerable show of native grass.

We followed the black woman to the margin of a forest of stringy-bark trees at a little distance. After snuffing about for a short time, like a hungry spectator at the window of a savoury cook-shop, she fixed on a tree in which, her olfactory organs informed her, opossums dwelt. As she was unencumbered by any article of apparel, she had no occasion to take off her clothes to perform her dangerous exploit, which we presently understood was to ascend the naked stem of the tall tree after an opossum. The woman first made an incision on the bark of the tree not much more than sufficient to receive her great toe, at about two or three feet from the ground. Placing her toe in the gap, she raised herself up, sustaining her weight on that single member of her foot, aided by a sort of clinging to the tree, which was far too thick to be embraced with one hand and arm; with her other arm she made a second incision with her native axe, and repeating her operation at the necessary intervals, she rapidly ascended the tree to a height of at least fifty feet, before she reached its spreading branches. In the fork of the trunk, in a little hollow, was an opossum, which she quickly pulled out and killed. Holding the animal in one of her hands, she descended the tree with an agility which excited our admiration, and with a rapidity and apparent carelessness that made us tremble. I had often heard talk of the natives performing this

feat, but I had never witnessed it before, and it was with the most lively curiosity, therefore, that I watched the operation. I felt quite relieved when she placed her foot safe on the ground, although she did not seem aware that she had done anything extraordinary. Holding the dead opossum by one ear, she gave it, laughing, to my little charge, and, with nods and laughter, retired. I was at a loss how to reward this act of unaffected kindness, when luckily, recollecting that I had a purple silk handkerchief in my pocket, I presented it to our sable benefactor; and I had the satisfaction to observe, from the deference, mixed, I thought, with a little female envy, which was paid to her by her less fortunate companions, and from their eager examination and lively admiration of the finery, that I had conferred on her a gift of no trifling importance. She immediately tied it round her waist, and casting a triumphant glance at the sultana with the red cotton handkerchief, much in the same way as a young lady in the old country, in the conscious superiority of a new bonnet, of the latest fashion, regards a humiliated rival in an old one, she took a seat on the log of a fallen gum tree, in an attitude of easy dignity—not courting, but submitting to the admiration which she excited.

In the meantime, the preparations for the chase of the kangaroo, after the fashion of the natives, were completed, and Musqueeto, summoning the united strength of his establishment, male and female, old and young, we sallied forth from the encampment, leaving the constables to guard the horses. Holding the little Georgiana by her hand, for she would not quit me for an instant, I and the magistrate accompanied the mob, which

consisted of five-and-twenty persons, two or three females remaining behind to take care of the children, half a dozen of which had emerged from some back recesses on the occasion of this general activity.

I did not much like the distribution of a bundle of spears among the men who all had waddies, which they held in their hands with their spears.

"I hope," said I to the magistrate, "that all will go on well; if these savages should become excited by the hunt, they might try a spear on us."

"Especially," replied my friend, "if Musqueeto, or one of his fellows should recognise you as the hero who gave them those disagreeable doses of swan-shot from the hut among the hills some time since."

"Oh!" said I, "I had a beard of ten days' growth then, and my dress was entirely different."

"That may be; but these savages have sharp eyes, and they never betray their emotions till the opportunity arrives for action. Those spears and waddies make one feel very disagreeable. Heaven grant that this hunting may not prove as disastrous as the Chevy Chase in times of yore."

With these doubts and fears we should have been glad to back out of this ticklish expedition, but it was too late.

Chapter Forty-first.

A Kangaroo Hunt by the Natives—They recognise an old Enemy—The Flight—The Skirmish—The Attack renewed—Scrogg's generous Devotion—Return to the Clyde—Crab resolves to leave the Country.

THE usual torpidity of the natives was now changed to the most lively activity, in which the women, and even the youngest children, joined. The men jabbered to one another, the women chattered all together, and the children cut little savage capers, casting juvenile spears at one another in sport and frolic. I made our guide understand that we wished him to warn us of any appearance of treachery, but he had no apprehension of any hostile intentions.

“No want to fight now,” said he; “hunt kangaroo.”

We observed, however, that he did not mingle with the natives in their proceedings, but with a sort of instinct that he was safer in our immediate vicinity than among the “black fellows,” as he called them, he kept close to our side.

The naked group made their way to the rear of the encampment, and, at the distance of about half a mile, Musceto assumed the management of the hunt. He directed half of his party to proceed, as Tom interpreted to us, to a distance of about four miles from the spot where we stood, and another party to extend themselves

circularly to the right, while others made a similar circuit to the left. By these means it was intended to enclose a circle, and to drive all the game to the centre. In the dry season it is the practice of the natives to set fire to the woods and so dislodge the game, which they slaughter as it flies from the flames towards their ambuscades. But, on the present occasion, as the grass will not burn in the winter season, they were obliged to pursue a more laborious expedient.

Musqueeto now sat down on the grass, and we followed his example, stationing ourselves on the log of a tree, and Tom informed us that we should have to wait till the first detachment of natives reached their destination before it would be time for us to advance.

We endeavoured, in the meanwhile, to engage Musqueeto in conversation, but he was not inclined to talk, and seemed to be engaged in some mental calculation.

"This is a new scene," observed the magistrate; "I little thought that you and I should be engaged in a hunting expedition with our equivocal acquaintance here."

"I hope it may all end well," said I. "Since you have hinted about their recognising me, I have had very disagreeable sensations. A fight with the savages would be an awkward affair, encumbered as we should be with our little charge impeding our motions."

The girl crept closer to me at the expression of these fears, but said nothing.

"It was only a few days ago," said the magistrate, "that I was reading a specious argument of a French writer in favour of natural over civilised life; I am inclined to think that if the eloquent sophist had possessed the experience which we have of these savages—whose

condition may be considered as the very perfection and model of the primitive state of society which the Genevese philosopher extolled—he would have modified his opinion.”

“The natives of Van Diemen’s Land,” said I, “seem to be but one degree removed from the animal creation—a sort of connecting link between man and the brute. Having only one idea above the brute, and that is—to eat him! But they have only one brute to eat—to wit, the kangaroo. In my opinion, the degraded condition of the natives of this island may be ascribed in a great measure to the nature of the country itself. There is no fruit, herb, or root indigenous to the soil which is fit for the sustenance of man, and no animal, like an ox, a sheep or a goat, capable of being domesticated so as to furnish a regular supply of food. The only animal fit to eat, apart from the opossum and such nasty things, is the kangaroo, and to catch the kangaroo the natives must be continually shifting their ground; consequently they are prevented from acquiring any fixed habitation, and are deprived of the advantage of those domestic habits which seem to form the first step in the progress of civilization.”

“Could you ever find out,” said I, “whether they have any idea of a Divine Being?”

“All that inquirers have been able to make out,” replied my friend, “is, that they have a belief in an evil spirit, which seeks to do them harm, but they cannot discover any notion among them of a good or creative spirit. Cook and Flinders have described long ago the religious, or rather the superstitious ceremonies of the Sydney natives; but the aborigines of this island either

do not practise the same comicalities, or we have not been able to witness them."

"Our ignorance of their language," I observed, "must be an obstacle to our acquiring a correct knowledge of their religious belief, or of their customs."

"No doubt; but their language, so far as we can understand it, seems capable of expressing only the most simple ideas; and indeed it is only the most simple ideas that they want to express."

"They are good mimics," said I.

"So are all savages; and many animals excel in the same way; birds imitate sounds, and monkeys imitate gestures. But our host is getting up; I suppose the sport is about to begin."

Musqueeto rose languidly from the ground, and ejaculated an order right and left to the natives within hearing, who repeated the word till it was lost in the distance. We then moved forward, Musqueeto taking, or seeming to take little notice of us, and retaining his usual sulky, stupid look. But as the shouts of his comrades grew louder and louder, and the distant view of the game occasionally met his eye, the passions of the savage were roused up, and his listless demeanour rapidly changed to that of intense animation, as he grew hot in the excitement of the hunt. The spirit of the savage now began to develope itself, and it was with hideous sounds and frantic gestures, which I should in vain attempt to describe, that he performed his part towards frightening the game into the centre of the circle, which at wide intervals, was formed around the scared and terrified animals. But these intervals, as we continued our advance, gradually grew less and less, till we came within hearing

of those who formed the farthest verge of the enclosure. As the circle narrowed, and as we caught occasional glimpses of a terrified kangaroo, the cries and antics of Musqueeto, and the other natives to the right and left, who were in sight, became more violent and furious, and the black naked savages, rattling their spears and brandishing their waddies, and screaming and dancing about in the most raging state of excitement, resembled a band of demons engaged in some infernal orgies. And now, with immense strides, a monstrous kangaroo standing six feet high, and with his gigantic tail heaving up and down behind him, hopped past us to the left. Musqueeto saluted him with a spear, which stuck in his shoulder, but broke off among the bushes; he was met by the natives at their post, who drove him back again by their shouts. Musqueeto darted out to meet him, and before the animal could stop itself in its career, he struck it sharply on the crown with his waddy. The creature shook its beautiful head and ears a little, stunned by the stroke, and Musqueeto, taking advantage of its confusion, repeated his blows, nimbly avoiding the dashes which the kangaroo made at him with the formidable claws of its hind feet, till he brought him to the ground. A yell of triumph proclaimed this first success, and Musqueeto, no longer the apathetic native which he so lately appeared, now exhibited himself in all the ferocity of the savage. His blood was up from his struggle with the kangaroo, and his exertions had lashed him into a state of almost ungovernable fury. Seeing him in this state we repented having engaged in this perilous sport, but to withdraw at such a moment would have excited the suspicion, and perhaps the anger of the natives. We

kept our fire-arms ready, therefore, and endeavoured to preserve our coolness and presence of mind in the midst of the general excitement.

The circle had now become narrowed as close as was desired, and we saw five kangaroos—foresters—in the middle, and one prodigious fellow, whom the natives greeted with the title of boomah! boomah! Three of the foresters were quickly dispatched with spears and waddies, but the boomah! stood in the midst looking with a sort of defiance on his enemies, who pressed upon him. Several spears were soon fixed in his body. He gave a bound as each sharp missile pierced his skin; but he still stood erect seeking for a passage through the ranks of his assailants. At last, as a party of three or four rushed at him from the point opposite to us, and tried to reach his head with their waddies, he gave a sudden plunge, and bounding towards the spot where the magistrate, with me and the little girl, were standing in silence, he effected his escape beyond the circle. Musquetteo stamped on the ground with rage and passion at the loss, and at that moment, the habit of the old sportsman taking possession of me, I raised up my piece and selecting the right-hand barrel, which always contained a ball, I fired; I was lucky enough to hit the back of its head, the ball passing through it. The animal made no cry, for the kangaroo never utters any sound, and giving one last tremendous bound into the air, fell dead. At the report of my fowling-piece the cries of the natives instantly ceased, and they became motionless as statues, casting rapid glances of suspicion and fear at me and at one another. This sudden silence succeeding the furious outcries of the preceding moment had a peculiar and

startling effect. I immediately ran to the game, and first, with the precaution of an old settler in the bush, I reloaded my piece, the natives gazing at me in silence. I then beckoned to the nearest native to come to me, pointing to the kangaroo, and inviting him by gestures to take the animal; he hesitated, and looked at the others. Calling black Tom, I bade him explain to the natives that I considered the game belonged to them, and as soon as they understood my meaning they came forward, but slowly and doubtingly. Musqueeto, however, came up without ceremony, and, examining the venison with the precision of a connoisseur, he evinced unqualified delight at the prize. Four natives, uniting their strength, contrived to carry the kangaroo to their encampment, which was at no great distance; while the rest went forward to make preparations for a feast. Before we arrived at the fires we were met by the two constables, who had been alarmed by the report of my piece. They had lost no time in throwing the saddles on the horses, and had started immediately to our assistance.

"We feared that you were in for it," said Sanders; "and Seroggs was all ready for a scrimmage, for he's no flincher when it comes to business—and that's the use of him."

"It's no use," said Seroggs, "to stand shilly-shallying; the best way is to shoot 'em down at once, and then you're sure they can't do you any harm. Never trust a native!"

"Better mount your horse, sir," advised Sanders; "they've got their spears and their waddies ready in their hands, and there's no knowing when they may be inclined to use them. Look at those three black

guards yonder jabbering together, and pointing to Mr. Thornley."

"They are talking about his capital shot," replied the magistrate, "and wondering, perhaps, how it was done."

"May-be, sir; but I don't like the way they left off when we looked at them. Better be on our guard, sir."

We had no apprehension of any violence being attempted, but we thought it best to be ready, so we took our horses from the constables and led them by the bridle. I put the child on mine, telling her not to be frightened, but to hold on fast by the mane. In this order we proceeded back to the fires, and the natives distributed themselves about, the game being cast in the middle of the open space. I saw two snakes lying by the side of the kangaroos, and I asked Tom what they were going to do with them.

"Eat 'em," said Tom; "snake good—eat many snake at Sydney."

As he spoke, a native took up the snakes, and, without skinning them, or performing any other operation of cleanliness, threw them on the fire; and after they had been done to his mind, he and one or two others, who seemed to have a right to partake, devoured them with much apparent satisfaction.

They now proceeded to dismember the largest of the kangaroos, and as the pieces of flint, which served as knives, were but clumsy tools to work with, I took out my bush-knife and presented it to Musqueeto. The knife contained one powerful blade and a smaller one, with a saw. I opened the saw, and explained its use to the natives around, who were much struck with the con-

trivance; but the large blade pleased them most. Musqueeto condescended, on this occasion, to make use of his new acquisition, by cutting to pieces the kangaroo. He first cut off the head, which he threw on one side, and then separated the shoulders and body from the loins, and with more politeness than I had given him credit for, he pushed towards us the hind quarters—the best part of the animal—inviting us to take it. Sanders, dismounting, threw it over the pommel of his saddle, and resuming his seat, urged us to lose no time in setting out, as we were now supplied with sufficient provision to last until we should reach some stock-hut, or settler's farm. We mounted accordingly, but the magistrate and I lingered for a few moments to observe the curiosity with which the natives examined the head of the kangaroo, which had been pierced by the ball from my fowling-piece. From the examination of the hole through the head, they were led to the examination of the instrument that effected it, and three or four of them crowded around me, pointing eagerly to the ornamental stock which was studded with bright silver nails, and had a broad piece of silver plate on the bend of the stock, usually placed there to receive the engraving of the name. As I had held the stock of my piece under my right arm, the natives had not had the opportunity of observing it before, but now they gazed on it with an expression of eagerness and surprise as if they recognized it as an old acquaintance.

“Look out, sir,” said Sanders, “the same three savages that we remarked jabbering together before, have got their eyes on your fowling-piece.”

“Thornley,” said the magistrate, earnestly, “I am

sure you are recognized; those natives remember your piece; we had better be off. Do you go first with the child, and I with the two constables will bring up the rear, three abreast. Can Tom run at a pinch?"

"As fast as you can canter," said Sanders.

"Move on then, and let us lose no time."

I and the magistrate mounted our horses, when a yell broke out from the clustering savages, which made the woods ring again; a yell so loud and thrilling, that it made our horses start and champ their bits. Had any other stimulus been wanting to hasten our movements, it now appeared in the shape of a spear thrown by a willing arm at me, but which missed and stuck in the flank of Scroggs's horse. The animal did not wait for a second spurring, nor Scroggs for a second hint, and the sight of this open declaration of war operated on us all. With one accord we galloped off round the base of the hill, Tom preceding us, who, however, was quickly left behind. Seeing this, the magistrate called out to us to pull up, and he directed Sanders to let Tom mount behind him as the ground was level, till we got beyond the reach of the natives. The delay, however, enabled the natives to intercept us at the turn of the hill, and we encountered them standing on the bank on our right. We sheered our horses off beyond the reach of their spears, but a womera, cast by some vigorous native, struck Scroggs's horse on the hind leg, and caused a temporary halt.

"Steady," cried the magistrate, "we have a clear field and no trees." A shower of spears interrupted his speech.

"Sanders, pick off that native to the right, with the bundle of spears in his left hand."

The constable fired, and the native fell. At this check the rest retreated among the trees and bushes.

"Now, Scroggs, my man, you must make your horse go; man's life is worth more than a horse's. Keep up for four-and-twenty hours, and we are safe."

But we could make but slow progress with the crippled horse, and we would not leave the man behind. We jogged on, therefore, for another hour, skirting a thick wood to our right, till we came to the base of a scrubby hill.

"Now, sir," said Sanders, "if the natives are determined to make a fight of it, this is the place where they'll do it. They have found out that Mr. Thornley is the same white man whom they fought with before, and no doubt he killed some of their relations at that time, and the survivors will have blood for blood; it's always the way with the natives."

"How was it," said I, "that Musqueeto was so quiet then? he must have known me."

"You see, sir, he's a Sydney native, and doesn't rightly belong to any tribe in this island. If you had hurt one of his gins, that would have been another matter, for the natives are like the whites in that—they don't like our people to take their gins; and that's what gives rise to most of the quarrels between the natives and the stock-keepers. The stock-keepers entice their gins away by a tenpenny nail, or a bit of broken glass bottle, or, best of all, a red handkerchief—there's nothing like a bit of red rag to come over a gal with, let her be black or white, and then the natives don't like it, and so they have to fight it out."

"And so must we fight it out," said the magistrate,

"for there are the natives coming forward in a body. I am sorry for it, but if we must defend our lives, the best way is to act decisively."

By this time we had reached the top of the hill, and beneath us was a level plain of considerable extent, but the descent of the hill was very steep and rugged. We drew ourselves up on a clear space, and waited for the attack. The natives also drew themselves up at a distance of about a hundred yards, and one of them, advancing towards us, with a waddy in his right hand, and a bundle of spears in his left, began a speech in a loud but calm voice, using abundant action, but without unseemly noise or passion.

"What does he say, Tom?" said the magistrate.

"He say you all bad white men."

"And what more? he must say more than that in that long speech."

"He say you come take his country, and eat his kangaroo, and take his gins. He say you very bad white men. And he say, this gentleman, Mitter Thornley, very bad white man indeed; he kill him brudder—brudder of black fellow dere—and he say he want Mitter Thornley to go stand there for him to throw spear at him."

"He sends you a challenge to fight a duel, Thornley," said the magistrate. "As a gentleman and man of honour you can't refuse, or Blackee will post you."

"Mitter Thornley go tand dere," said Tom, "black fellow throw one, two, three, many spear at him; then black fellow no want to fight; only kill Mitter Thornley; then very good friends."

"Come, Thornley," said my friend, laughing, "it is plain that you must perform the part of Quintus Curtius on this occasion."

"Please, sir," said Scroggs, "I don't know how Squinting Curtis managed with the natives, but if we have only to do with that one jawing away there, we might buy him off, perhaps, with something that we have about us. There's the remains of the bottle of rum; offer him that."

Tom advanced accordingly, calling out "corrobara," meaning thereby that he wished for a parley to talk the matter over a bit with the aggrieved native. Tom proposed that the half bottle of rum should end the affair amicably, but the offer was indignantly rejected. Tom reported progress, and the native continued his harangue, enumerating over and over again the injuries which he had received, and the vengeance which he would take.

"Let us try him with something more," said the magistrate, "it is something to get him to negotiate at all for the price of his revenge; if it is only a question of amount I think we may manage it. Let us consult Tom; Tom, what shall we give him?"

"You give bottle of rum; Mitter Thornley's red handkerchief for his gin; and give him buttons from your coat."

"My coat buttons!" said the magistrate. "Well, to save my friend's valuable life, and to prevent a breach of the peace—for I see Thornley is red hot to fight this duel—I suppose I must let him have them."

Tom was accordingly despatched with these new presents; but the native now took a fancy to Tom's axe, and, after some chaffering, Tom surrendered it. But there was still a hitch, and our ambassador returned again.

"Black fellow say, that, 'cause Mitter Thornley hab the piccaninny, he throw one little spear at that man there instead."

"Throw a spear at me!" exclaimed Scroggs, "I won't have any spears thrown at me! Tell him to go and be hanged!"

"Black fellow say," said Tom, "he must throw one little spear at somebody, 'cause if he no throw spear all the mob point finger at him. He say, he no hurt white man, only stick spear in him a little bit."

"Stick a spear in me a little bit!" said Scroggs; "I'll stand no such thing! Let him stick his spears into the gum-trees, if he likes. What am I to have spears stuck in me for, more than anybody else?"

"My good fellow," said the magistrate, "if the sacrifice of yourself will have the effect of preventing a fight, and of saving the effusion of blood, I should advise you to consent; but, of course I cannot order you in such a matter; it is entirely for your own consideration and generosity to determine whether you will be the means, for a trifling smart perhaps, to save many human lives. Remember Quintus Curtius!"

"—— Squinting Curtis! He never stood up to have spears shied at him I'll be bound."

"If you go through this part well," said the magistrate, "I shall certainly recommend you to the governor for reward and promotion."

"It's very hard," whined Scroggs, "but I am always to be the one to have the worst hand at the game. It was my bottle of rum that those black rascals swallowed, and now that it has got their pluck up, I am to be a cockshy for that rampaging devil there, that keeps brandishing his spears about."

"I'll tell you what, my man," said I, "I don't think any harm will come of it, or I would not consent to your going; but if you'll take the job off my hands, as I've got the child to take care of, I'll give you a hundred dollars!"

"Well, said Scroggs, "I'll go, but I don't like it. You mean a hundred dollars in money, not property?"

"Yes," said I, "a hundred silver dollars down."

"It's for the sake of the child I go, not the money. But nobody can say I haven't a right to something for making a target of myself for that black rascal to stick his spears in."

"Why, he'll never hit you," said Sanders. "You have a right to one spear to defend yourself with according to the customs of the natives."

"The desire to get the dollars outweighing his fears, the doughty constable proceeded to the spot where this novel sort of monomachia was to take place, and standing about forty yards from the native, waited with a most rueful countenance for the commencement of the ceremony. The native treated him in the first place with an explanatory and expostulatory harangue, which the miserable Scroggs received much in the same way as a criminal listens to the congratulatory condolences of the executioner before he is turned off. The native then performed various mystic evolutions, which so protracted the proceedings, that the impatient Scroggs cried out—

"D—— you, if you're going to throw a spear at me, shy away, and don't keep me waiting in this manner!"

The only word which the black man understood was the first, which almost all the natives had picked up from

the frequent use of that expletive by the stock-keepers, with whom they mostly came in contact; but as he well knew it was an epithet of vituperation, he took it as a sign of heroic defiance from the magnanimous Scroggs, and suddenly stopping short in his fantastic antics, he cast a spear at the constable, which narrowly missed his arm, and whirled rapidly past him for more than twenty yards.

"Hulloa," cried Scroggs, "that's too close to be pleasant. Take it easy, will you, you ugly blackguard!"

The next spear struck him on his right side, but meeting there with a tobacco-box, it was luckily stopped from doing further mischief than staving in the lid of it. But this was too much for Scroggs. Bestowing a hearty curse on all the natives in the island, and including himself in his general execration for being such a fool as to stand there to be made a sieve of, he ignominiously turned tail, and the next missile projected by the savage took effect in his fleshy protuberance behind. Scroggs gave a roar that might have done credit to a wild bull, and without waiting for further compliments, ran back to us, Sanders laughing heartily at his condition.

"I say, Scroggs, my boy, you'll never be able to show your wounds that way. Do you remember the sergeant of the 40th showing us his wounds in front? It will never do to leave them behind. Go and let the black fellow have another shy at your chest, that you may get honourably marked and look respectable."

"A hundred dollars," said Scroggs, "in dollars, not property!" pleased to find himself without more hurts. "Well—I wouldn't mind standing another shy for the same money."

The native, who had given a yell of triumph when he saw his victim with the spear sticking in behind him, now gathered up his spoils, and returning to his companions we saw no more of the natives for that time, and we proceeded on our way.

We had to sleep one night in the bush, which we managed as well as we could, and towards the night of the next day we reached a stock-hut to the east of Salt-Pan Plains. Here we parted with Tom, the magistrate giving him an order on a storekeeper at Launceston, to supply him with anything he pleased to the amount of five pounds; and cutting across the country to Oatlands, we were glad to repose ourselves at a comfortable inn. At this place we learnt that the *Jupiter* had sailed two days before, and as I was anxious to get home with my charge, I begged the magistrate to proceed to Launceston and ascertain what had become of the uncle of Georgiana. I may as well say here, that my friend found that he had escaped from the island on board that vessel.

The subsequent difficulties which my charge had to encounter, I shall have to relate in their proper place. The constables, at my request, accompanied me to the Clyde, striking across the country by a short cut from Jericho. I rewarded them liberally for their activity and good conduct, giving Scroggs an order on the bank at Hobart Town, for the hundred dollars, according to my promise. My wife and children received the stranger with an affectionate kindness and sympathy, which soon reached her little heart, and in a short time she considered herself as a child of the family. After recounting my adventures, and my escape from the cavern of the red-house, my wife scolding me, of course, for my

rashness in running such a risk, I lost no time in turning my attention to the affairs of my farm, which had been for so long a time interrupted by the various accidents which had befallen me. On inquiring for Crab, I was informed that he had set out for his sheep-run an hour or two after I had started for Hobart Town, and had not returned. His absence did not give me any uneasiness at the time; but another week having passed away without his appearance, I became alarmed, and began seriously to think of setting out in search of him. As we were discussing the matter, towards the close of the day, we observed our old friend proceeding across the meadow, in the direction of the house. He seemed faint and exhausted, and his clothes were dirtied and stained with travel. He had a bundle on his shoulder, the weight of which seemed to oppress him, and he trudged along, leaning on a stick, in a manner unusual to his vigorous habits. I immediately went out to meet him, and to assist him into the house. He sat himself down in the great chair with a deep sigh, casting his load on the floor, which rattled on the ground with a jingling crash.

"Thank God!" he said, "I'm at home again. I thought I should never have seen you any more. Such a country as this is! No stage-coach—no nothing! But it sarves me right; I ought to have left it long ago; but now I have made up my mind. The next ship that goes takes me. There's nothing but wretchedness here; you'll all be ruined and murdered, every one—that's my opinion."

"Why, what has happened?" said I; "what on earth is the matter with you?"

“What has happened? why, everything has happened that shouldn't happen. I'll tell ye if you'll give me time; but, first I must have something to eat. Oh! there's the mutton-chops. Only let me get a little life into my body, and then I'll tell ye.”

But the adventures of Mr. Crab on this memorable journey must form the commencement of a new chapter.

Chapter Forty-Second.

How Crab sold his Sheep—The embarrassment of Riches—Crab's Misadventures—He resolves to leave the Colony.

"It's all owing to that bit of land at Cherry-tree Bottom," said Crab, striking the table with his horny hand, to give greater emphasis to his position, and causing all the tea-things to give a simultaneous jump at the concussion. "It's all owing to hankering after that land which I had no business with, and it sarves me right, and it's a judgment on me! What have I to do with land in this outlandish place? If I hadn't let 'em give me that land I shouldn't have wanted to build a house on it; and if I hadn't wanted to build a house on it, I shouldn't have wanted to sell the sheep, and then I shouldn't have been plagued with those confounded dollars! But I'll go by the next ship! Betsy, my dear, write a letter for me, there's a good gal."

"With pleasure," said Betsy, who was the old man's favourite. "Who to?"

"To the storekeeper at Hobart Town—Mr. Stikitinem."

"What an odd name!"

"He's a sort of Dutchman, my dear, that supplies me with my things. I'd write myself, but living in this wretched country has hurt my eyes, and I never could see to read writing easy. I can make out big print very well when I know what it's about, as a chapter in the

Bible or so. But I never did write much, because my hand is hard with holding the plough, and a little thing like a pen comes unnatural to it."

"What are you going to do with this handkerchief full of dollars?" interrupted my wife. "I hope, Mr. Crab, you are not going to keep them here; it's a dangerous temptation in the bush."

"That's just what I don't know," observed Crab, sorrowfully; "ever since I've had 'em, that's the very question that every body has asked me, and the very one I never could answer. But trouble enough have I had to get 'em, and I do believe they're the last dollars left in the colony?"

"You have sold some sheep, I suppose," said I; "what did you get for 'em?"

"Nothing but mortification—and those dollars. One chap wanted three years' credit, and he offered thirty shillings a head—and then he offered forty shillings a head; but I said, 'Money down, that's my way of dealing; that's the way I bought 'em, and that's the way I'll sell 'em.' Then another Launceston chap, he offered to give me I don't know how many head of cattle for 'em; and, says I, 'What are they, wild cattle?' 'Of course,' says he. 'And where may they be?' says I. 'They're somewhere near Circular Head,' says he. 'Then,' says I, 'they may stay at Circular Head till their heads grow where their tails are; I'll have nothing to do with wild cattle, that go scampering about all over the island, and you never know where to find 'em when you want 'em.' At last a new settler, that had heard that mine were fine-wooled sheep, came and said he'd buy four hundred of 'em."

“ ‘How do you mean to pay?’ said I. ‘Bank notes,’ said he, ‘of the Bank of Diemen’s Land.’

“I don’t know how it was—I was over-persuaded, for he was a terrible talking chap, and if ever any one had the gift of the gab, it was he. And so we went to my sheep-run at the back of Norfolk Plains, and then the dispute began. He wanted to pick the ewes, all the young ’uns, and the best, though, for the matter of that, they’re all good; but I said ‘No! that’s a thing I won’t anyways permit. Take ’em as they run out of the yard.’ Then he talked at me I suppose for half an hour, to convince me that the buyer had a right to pick ’em; but I wasn’t going to be convinced by the likes of him, and so I said, ‘Take ’em or leave ’em, a pound a head’s my price, money down, as they run out of the yard.’ Then he proposed that we should each pick one till he had taken his four hundred. Well, I thought that was reasonable, and so we managed it that way. When he had pitch marked ’em with his brand, and was going to drive ’em away, says I— ‘Where’s the money?’ ‘Give me a pen and ink,’ said he, in an off-hand way, ‘and I’ll give you a check.’ ‘A check,’ says I, ‘I want none of your checks—it’s the money I want.’ ‘Then,’ says he, ‘you must come with me to Launceston, for I’m not such a fool as to carry money about with me, and there I’ll get you the cash.’ ‘That’s all very well,’ said I, ‘but in this country we never let the sheep go without the money. So, if you please, the four hundred sheep that you’ve marked must stay here till I’m paid for ’em.’ ‘Very well,’ said he.

“And he gave you the money at Launceston, I suppose?” said I.

"You shall see. Give me another cup of tea. Let me tell my story my own way, or else I shall never ha' done. So I went with him to Launceston, and we had a quart of port out of the cask at the inn there—it wasn't bad stuff, but nothing like the beer one gets at a public-house at home; and then he wrote a check, as he called it, and told the landlord to take it to a merchant of the town, and sure enough he brought back four hundred bank-notes of four dollars each, as he said, but I couldn't make out the writing on them, the letters were so floured about, but I thought it must be all right, as the landlord was there witnessing it. He wrote an order for the sheep to my shepherd, and I signed it; he asked me what my christian name was, and I said Samuel, and he said he shouldn't have guessed it, but he dared say my shepherd would understand it, and so there I sat with the four hundred bits of paper before me.

"The landlord came in, and sat down by me, and talked of the news, and says he, 'Have you heard of the great failure in Hobart Town? That flashy cove that was flying his paper kites hasn't been able to raise the wind any longer?' 'Flying paper kites!' said I; 'what on earth can a man want to fly kites for? I used to fly a kite when I was a boy. . . .' 'I see,' said he, 'you don't take. Flying kites means issuing these things,' pointing to the dollar-notes, 'and then when it comes to paying them, its 'no effects!'

"What the landlord said had a terrible effect on me, for all of a sudden it struck me I had parted with my four hundred prime ewes for four hundred bits of paper that wasn't good enough to light pipes with. I broke out into a cold sweat directly.

"'Landlord,' said I, 'can you take me to the mer-

chant that gave you these notes?' 'To be sure I can,' said he, 'it's only a step.' Says I to the merchant, 'I have a particular reason for wanting silver instead of paper just now. Couldn't you give me dollars instead of these notes?' 'Certainly,' said he, very polite-like, 'but I should have thought,' said he, 'you would find dollars very inconvenient to carry about.' 'Not the least in the world,' said I; so he counted 'em out, and put 'em in an old gunny-bag, and then I put the gunny-bag in my handkerchief, so as to look like a change of clothes, and hoisting them on a stick over my shoulder I marched back to the inn. 'That's a large sum of money,' said the landlord, 'to have in cash; and it's a great temptation to servants; I hope you are not a-going to keep it at my inn.' This was the first of my troubles. 'No,' said I, 'I'm going to take myself off home—dollars and all.' 'I should advise you,' said he, 'not to let anybody know you have that sum of money about you; it might bring you to mischief.' 'Never fear,' said I, 'I know how to take care of myself.'

"After I had had some dinner, I set out, but I found the dollars a greater weight than I thought for, so I stopped at a settler's hut about ten miles from Launceston, and sat down, intending to stay the night there.

"'What have you got here?' said he, trying to lift up my load, and wondering at the weight of it. 'Why, they can't be dollars? and yet they feel like 'em.' 'Dollars,' said his wife, 'Oh, Lord! we shall all be murdered in our beds. Pray, Mr. Crab, don't let 'em be here! You're sure to have been watched, and the prisoners will try to get 'em, and murder us all. How could you think of bringing 'em here?' 'If I have brought 'em

here,' said I, a little hurt-like, 'I can take them away again. I'll go on to Old Simon's, and he'll give me lodging for the night, I dare say.'

"The husband didn't want me to go, and said it was nonsense; but I saw his wife wished me to be off, so I shouldered up my dollars, and went on to Old Simon's, which wasn't above two miles off, by the road side.

"Can you give me a night's lodging?" said I. 'With all my heart,' said he; 'Jem, put on some nut-ton-chops. What have you got here?' said he. 'I'll tell you at once,' said I, 'because I know I can trust you; I've been selling some sheep, and these are the dollars I got for 'em.' 'Dollars!' said he; 'how can you think of going about with such a heap of dollars? You'll be robbed and murdered before you get home. But let's put 'em out of sight.'

"With that he clapped an empty tripod over 'em, just in time, for his man came in a moment after with the meat.

"I had hardly finished eating a few chops, when who should come in but three strange men; one was a ticket-of-leave man, and the other two were Government men just arrived, and they were going on to Launceston to the master that they had been assigned to. Simon gave me a look as much as to say, 'here's a mess!' but there was no help for it; he couldn't well refuse shelter to travellers on a winter night; so they looked about to sit themselves down, and says one,

"Any harm in moving this tripod, master, to let this seat come nearer the fire?"

"Simon gave me another look, and I saw he didn't like it; so I got up, and said, 'Take my chair, I've been sitting by the fire all the evening, and I'm warm

enough;' so I sat myself down on the tripod. It wasn't an easy seat, for the three prongs stuck up very awkward, let alone its being so low; but I thought that was the best thing to do; so I sat there very uncomfortable, but trying to look easy.

" 'You seem to have rather a hard seat, master,' said one of the prisoners—kind-like. 'Not a bit,' said I, for a thought came across me that he had a suspicion of what I sat there for; 'not a bit; I had rather stay where I am.'

"Then the others offered me their seats, but the more they wanted me to get up, the more I wouldn't. 'No—no,' thought I; 'here I'll stick, my fine fellows, till I've seen you safe out of the house.'

"Old Simon was very fidgety; he had only one spare bed, which the prisoners offered to me, seeing that I was respectable-looking; but I wouldn't move from my tripod, although the ends grieved me sorely; and there I was obliged to stay all night, for I didn't dare to move, like a hen sitting on eggs; and a more miserable night I never passed."

We all burst out a-laughing at this narrative, which made Crab very indignant.

"It's all very well to laugh," said he, "but how would you like to sit on a tripod all night yourself?"

"Well," said I, "and how did it end?"

"End! I thought it never would end! But every thing ends at last. In the morning the men went away; and then old Simon said directly,—

" 'For heaven's sake, Mr. Crab, make haste home. I haven't had a wink of sleep all night.'

"Says I, 'I won't trouble you long, you may depend

on it;' and I tried to get up, but I couldn't. I was so cramped with sitting, that I was quite stiff, and the tripod seemed to have grown to me."

"No wonder," said I, "but how did you manage to get on?"

"Old Simon was so wishful to get rid of me and my load of dollars, that he lent me his bullock-cart to forward me on a bit, and we put the bag of dollars in the tripod, and covered it over with siftings, to make it look natural-like. He helped me to lift it into the cart, and his man drove the bullocks for about a dozen miles, and then he stopped and looked at me, and then at the bullocks. I took that as a hint to get out, but I was sadly puzzled to know what to do with my money, and the tripod plagued me almost as bad. He took hold of one side of the tripod and I of the other, and we set it down by the roadside.

"Bless me," said he, 'how heavy the old pot has got! It can't be the siftings; it's like a pot of dollars.'

"This made me quake, and I looked in his face; but I saw he said it quite innocent-like, and gave it no more thought, and so he drove back, and I stood there for some time, by the side of my money, musing a bit, for I didn't well know what to do.

"Presently I heard a precious noise of whips cracking, and I saw a lot of cattle a scampering down the road, that the stock-keepers were driving to the Government Store at Launceston. There were thirty of 'em or more. On they came helter-skelter, the stock-keepers after them, cracking their whips, and hallooing to them to keep on the road. My first thought was to sit on my tripod to guard my dollars, but before I could well know

what to do, on they came, and as I sat crouched up, they didn't see me till they were close upon me, and the hindmost cattle pushed on the foremost, and the men urging them on behind with their whips and shouts, before I could avoid them, they were on me, and one heifer, giving a snort at me with her nose, and a nuzzle with her head, tumbled me over and over, tripod and all, and the stock-keepers damned me as they dashed by for putting their cattle out of the road, and there I lay!"

"Upon my word," said my wife, at this pause—all of us keeping very grave faces, for we did not dare to laugh at the mishaps which he told with so much seriousness—"you have been very unfortunate, Mr. Crab; but how could you think of carrying such a load of dollars across the country?"

"How could I help it?" said Crab, angrily; "I never had to do so at home; but in this wretched country there's no way to carry anything when you want it."

"But why didn't you take the bank-notes? they would have been lighter to carry."

"Catch me taking their bank-notes, as they call 'em," replied Crab; "do you think I never saw a bank-note before? Why, they're no more like real bank-notes than chalk is like cheese! No, no, nothing like the silver dollars."

"They seem to have been a sad inconvenience to you on this occasion," said I, "these same dollars. But I am anxious to know how you managed at last."

"I couldn't manage 'em any how. So I was obliged to take 'em out of the tripod, and put 'em over my shoulder again, and then I didn't know what to do with

the tripod. While I was thinking, I saw a gentleman and lady coming along the road in a gig, with a roof to it, and two horses, one before the other, the same as we used to put 'em in a cart in Shropshire; but they came spanking along at a precious rate. When I called out to them to stop, the gentleman pulled up sharp at this, and says he, 'What's the matter, my man?' Says I, 'May I make so bold as to ask you, as you've got two horses to your shay, and one to pull along the other, just to leave this tripod at old Simon's, about a dozen miles from here?' 'D——n your tripod,' says he, 'and you too!' he did, upon my word, although he was a gentleman; and the lady laughed and said, 'Upon my lap, I suppose!' and then the gentleman laughed louder, and gave the fore-horse a twitch with his whip, and the horse stood on his hind-legs just for a moment, turning round-like, and the lady gave a little scream, and off they went. 'Good luck to ye, and better manners,' said I, and I took up the tripod with one hand, and with my bag of dollars on my other shoulder, I walked on, but it was a weary job, and before I had gone a couple of miles I was quite knocked up. I sat down again by the road-side, and I was so tired that I was almost tempted to leave the dollars where they were, or to bury them in the bush. While I was looking about for a convenient place, I saw a lot of people coming along the road, and I soon perceived it was a road-gang of yellow jackets going to work. I was terribly troubled at this, for I thought they might be tempted to make an attack on me, so I clapped my bag into the tripod again, and sat down upon it, careless-like, till they should pass by. But they stopped on the road just where I was; and the overseer set them to work

round about me. They laughed and jeered at me for sitting that fashion on the iron pot, but I sat firm; and then the overseer came up and asked me if I was ill, but I didn't care to tell him my secret; when, luckily, there came up a bullock-cart, drawn by four bullocks, and in it was a fine buxom gal a-going to be married for a fancy in the church at Hobart Town; and the young man was with her in the cart holding her, to keep her steady, because the road was rough; and fine and merry they were. There was her father and mother in another cart behind, and seeing me sitting on my tripod, they stopped to look at me, and the young gal laughed fit to split herself, though what there was to laugh at I can't make out, for I was miserable enough, not knowing what to do with those confounded dollars, and the convicts all round me, suspecting something, I'm sure. Well, seeing them so jolly-like, I called out to them to give me a lift. 'I won't have that tripod in my cart,' screamed the gal, and then she laughed louder than ever. 'Whatever have you got in it?' said she. 'Hush,' said I, 'I'll tell you by-and-by.' 'How heavy it is!' said the bullock-driver. 'Its heavy with the damp,' said I, not knowing what to say; 'from being on the ground;' and then there was more laughing; and the young man said I was a wag!"

"And how did you get on with your new party?" said Betsy, with her handkerchief over her mouth.

"I'll tell ye, but don't hurry me."

"I didn't like that such good-natured folks should suppose I carried that tripod about for nothing; so after we had got about a dozen miles on our way, I told 'em that I had been selling some sheep, and that I was carrying home the dollars.

“ ‘Dollars!’—shrieked the gal. ‘Oh—heavenly gracious! we shall all be murdered, and that road-gang of prisoners will be after us to get the money. Do, pray,’ said she, ‘get out of our cart, and get into the other one;’ but the old lady was as afeared as the young one, and so I was cast adrift again with my dollars and my tripod, and with a very heavy heart I saw the carts drive out of sight!

“At last I was obliged to leave old Simon’s tripod behind, and I set out again, till I reached a settler’s house just before you come to Elizabeth River. I had much ado to prevail on ’em to let me and my dollars rest there for the night, and the man’s wife was so frightened, that we all three sat up all night watching the money, she declaring every minute that she heard the sound of men’s feet coming to break into the house.

“They started me off in their bullock-cart next morning, glad to get rid of me, and that took me twenty miles, and I walked the remainder, and got into Jericho just at dark. There’s a sergeant’s party at that place, and I went into the guard-room, and asked ’em to let me sit there all night. And so there I sat, with my bag in my lap, just nodding, and afraid to sleep, and almost killed by the weight of the dollars all the long night. Next morning I started again at daybreak. I thought I never should get up the Den Hill; but here I am at last, and there are those confounded dollars. But they’ll serve to pay my passage home, for in this abominable place I’ll stay no longer. Now, Betsy, my dear, have you got your pen ready?”

“I’ve been waiting for you all the time,” replied Betsy, “what shall I say?”

“Do you write what I tell you,” said Crab.

"MR. STICKITINEM.

"SIR,

"This comes, hoping you are well, as I am at this present writing."

"But you are not well," said Betsy, "I never saw you look so ill in my life."

"It's the way, my dear," said Crab, waving his hand; "a letter must be begun some way, and that's the way I always begin mine: it's like the coulter that's in front of the plough. Now, go on and say,

"This wretched country has been the death of me—and I mean to go home by the next ship. So please to take a place for me, and tell the captain to be sure to let it be somewhere near the axle-tree, where there's no motion.

"Because I remember I was qualmish coming over," added Crab, "but you needn't put that in the letter."

"And what else shall I say?" said Betsy.

"You've said it all, thank'ee, my dear; but you may just say that the last bag of sugar was wetted out of all conscience, and as gritty as a gravel cart. And tell him that I'll give forty shillings a bushel for all the grass seed he's got left; and to try to get me some strawberry plants from the nursery garden at Pitt-Water; and to be sure to see that my bed place on board the vessel is long enough, for I lost two inches in height coming over, cramped up in the steerage; and ask him to see if he can't get a couple of brick-makers lent from the government; I should like to see a tidy house put up in the bottom yonder; nothing looks neater than a nice red brick house, with a fish-pond in front, and an harbour at the bottom of the garden. And

that reminds me that I shall want a shingle hammer and a cask of shingle nails; and (this rum-and-water makes one very sleepy)—and to see if the ship can take home my last year's wool, and what's the price of lamb's wool; and I want a couple of sawyers, and a carpenter, to saw the ship into planks—that is the logs—and—this journey has so knocked me up that I can't write any more—my dear, write the rest yourself—you know what I want to say—I'll just finish this tumbler, and then I'll go to bed."

"But what will you do with these dollars?" said my wife.

"The dollars," said Crab, his intellects worn out by the fatigue of his journey, and confused with the three tumblers of rum-and-water which he had unconsciously indulged in, "put 'em—put 'em—in the tripod."

The next day Crab got up with the early light, and to get rid of the anxiety of having these unfortunate dollars in the house, he buried them with great care and secrecy in the bush; but the very same day the prisoner whom I have before mentioned as having been sentenced to one hundred lashes, and pardoned, pitched upon the plant, and observing that the ground had lately been disturbed in an out-of-the-way place, he dug up the loose earth with a stake, and finding the gunny-bag containing the dollars, he carried it, just as it was, to the magistrate's house. An inquiry having been made, which set the whole district a-talking, the news reached us, and the bag of dollars was duly restored to Crab, who found the number of the dollars correct.

For this act of honesty the magistrate recommended the prisoner for a free pardon, which in due course he

received, and he is now a flourishing settler. But the bag of dollars still remained to perplex the distracted Crab; and as the existence of this amount of silver bullion was now the talk of the whole district, we were obliged to send it to Hobart Town, escorted by Crab and two constables.

“Silver dollars,” said Crab, “are a very fine thing to talk about, and to wish for, but they’re very troublesome to carry about, and still more dangerous to keep by you. If one could only trust those fellows at the Bank,” said he, “there’s nothing like bank-notes after all.”

Chapter Forty-third.

Fourteen years pass by—The Emigrant's Wealth—A Letter from the Gypsy's daughter—Death of Crab.

IT was fourteen years after the occurrences which I have related in my preceding memoirs, that I was sitting in my garden, under a splendid mimosa tree which we had cherished for many years as a favourite spot—enjoying the calm of a peaceful evening.

I had for several years past resigned the active management of my farms, with my flocks and herds, to my eldest son, who, with his wife and family, resided with me in our large stone house, after the old patriarchal custom. My daughter Betsy, who had married George Beresford in 1827, had five children, and resided at Cherry-tree Bottom, in a comfortable cottage, of which Crab, now very far advanced in years, and who for some time past had grown very feeble, was the dissatisfied owner. Beresford, the elder, had married Lucy Moss, in 1824, and they now resided on the banks of the Shannon River, surrounded by a numerous family.

It was the close of the summer season, in the month of March, and the face of the country had for some weeks assumed that brown autumnal tint which is the prevailing hue of the fields and foliage for the greater part of the year, in Van Diemen's Land. Two tiny urchins, brother and sister, were playing near me on a

plot of English grass, whose lively green, and thick, close sward, contrasted pleasingly with the brown, coarse tufts of the native plains beyond. Rather too thickly clustered, in a space that was covered with fruits and flowers, were apple, pear, and peach trees; the former bearing the ruddy tint of the English fruit, and the latter in its full ripeness. A fine boy of eight years of age was coaxing a young kangaroo with sugar, and a white cockatoo, raising up his yellow-feathered tuft, screamed and chattered on the walk, to attract the notice of his playfellows. In the park-like plain below were grazing some of the dairy cows, with two or three horses, and a small pet flock of merino sheep.

I was attentively reading a volume of a work which I had lately received from England, for being now able to indulge in my early taste for books, I had accumulated about twelve hundred volumes in a small library, which formed a room, looking on the river, especially devoted to my own serious contemplations; but the gambols of my grandchildren interrupted me continually.

The perusal of my book had produced in me that feeling of melancholy which sometimes takes possession of one's mind without any definable cause. Indeed, of all men, I was one of those the least inclined to melancholy thoughts, and God had been pleased to bless me with such prosperity and increase, that if tears rose in my eyes it must have been from the very fulness of my satisfaction.

I laid down my book, and was revolving, as I sat, the many scenes of my busy and adventurous life, when my dear wife, the companion of my labours and the sharer of my prosperity, appeared at the end of the walk, with

a letter in her hand, and supporting on her arm her aged mother, who, with the assistance of a staff, was still able, though far advanced beyond the ordinary span of human life, to take her accustomed walks in the garden. My dear Mary was changed a little in her looks, but her heart was still as warm and as affectionate as ever. She wore her own gray hair, disdaining the artifice of conventional disguise, and boasting that she was prouder of being the grandmother of such a family than of all the brown and clustering curls of her early youth. I could tell by her countenance that she had some agreeable news to communicate as she moved towards me. She gave me the letter with a smile; it bore the mark of England, and on its seal was the single word "Georgiana."

I ought to say here, that after the Gypsy's daughter had been received in my family, immediate steps were taken by me and the magistrate for securing her legal rights in England. Various letters passed, and at the end of four years an agent, duly empowered by her legal guardians, arrived in the colony to take charge of her on her passage home. Her uncle, John Shirley, he informed us, had obtained possession of the estates as next heir; but the elder brother, William, had made a will, by which he devised the whole of his estates and property to trustees for the benefit of George Shirley, should he ever return to England, or to his children. It was impossible to dispute the will, but the uncle denied the marriage and the identity of the child. These points were easily proved in the colony; but, as the trustees in England were desirous of her presence at home for their greater satisfaction, and for the better prosecution of her

cause, we took advantage of the opportunity of the return of a friend and his wife to the mother country to place her under female care, and, accompanied by the agent, she set sail in 1828. She was then eleven years of age, and one of the most beautiful little girls I ever saw, and beginning to be highly accomplished, for our governess had done her duty well, and the child had amply replied to the unmeasured attention which she bestowed on her.

I remember when I told my old friend, the magistrate, of her intended departure, and expressed my satisfaction that she would meet with no troubles in England, like those to which she had been exposed from the machinations of her uncle, and from the caprice of the savages in this country, my worthy and facetious friend was pleased to observe that,

“Bad as that was she might be worse.”

“Why, what can they do worse with her?” said I.

“Why,” replied my friend, “they can put her in Chancery!”

My children, who had become attached to their affectionate playmate, were very sad, I remember, at this sort of evil prognostication on the part of my friend, thinking that to be put in Chancery was some terrible disaster; and they conjured up all sorts of horrid ideas about a prison, and looking through the bars; but when I explained to them that the Court of Chancery was a place of refuge, curiously and ingeniously contrived for the redress of wrongs, and for the protection of the orphan; and that in twenty or thirty years, or, at least, in the course of half a century, the rights of their young friend would be in a fair progress of restoration, as shortly after that period some succeeding Lord Chan-

cellor would probably intimate when her case might be mentioned at some future time, with a view to its being begun to be heard, they were silenced; although, I am inclined to think, not quite satisfied with my well-meant explanation.

We had received many letters from Miss Shirley since her arrival in England, and the first news that we had of her was that she was in Chancery, which spread a gloom over my family, that was cleared up, however, when we were informed that she did not suffer in her health in consequence, and that in the meantime her guardians supplied all her wants with a liberal hand; for her case was so plain that no human being had any doubt of the success of her cause, excepting, of course, the high functionary who had to decide on it. We were very anxious, therefore, to hear of the progress of our young friend, and it was with lively interest that I opened the letter, and read aloud its contents. It was addressed to my wife in the inside, and ran thus:—

“MY DEAREST MRS. THORNLEY,

“My previous letters will have taught you to expect that the most important event of my life would soon take place, and that I should again change my name; but the change, I assure you, has produced no alteration in the heart, towards you and yours, of your grateful Georgiana. I may now break through the reserve which I have hitherto maintained in respect to some points relating to my marriage.

“My first acquaintance with my husband began at Milan, whither my guardian had taken me two years ago in the course of our travels through Italy. We had

gone to the opera on the evening of our arrival, without being aware of the piece that was to be performed, or not thinking of its application to myself. The opera passed off very well, but the next piece was the 'Gypsy.' The scene brought back to my recollection my early sorrows in Van Diemen's Land, and by one of those strange coincidences which sometimes take place to our wonder in real life, the dark Italian eyes of one of the performers brought back so vividly to my recollection the look of my poor father when he caressed me shortly before his melancholy fate, that I became troubled, and a tide of painful thoughts rushing in upon me, I fainted. A gentleman—young—and handsome, of course, assisted my guardian to convey me to our carriage, and such assistance accepted was a sufficient introduction for the next day. Our intimacy increased, and although he was eight years older than I, he became attached to me: but I struggled hard to prevent my heart from becoming engaged, fearful that, from his rank and connections, he might despise me when he came to learn the secret of the Gypsy's daughter. This continued for the two years that we remained abroad, when, having learned to appreciate his generous character, I determined to reveal to him my terrible secret. He declared that he did not love me less, and esteemed me more for my confidence and sincerity. Shortly after this he quitted our society under the plea of his affairs in England requiring his presence; and on our return home he presented to me a packet of papers, and immediately retired. I was alarmed at this conduct, and instantly opened the packet, when I found documents completely exculpating my dear father from any share in the death of the

game-keeper, for his supposed participation in which he had been condemned to banishment. That obstacle—which indeed existed only on my part—being removed—with the consent of my guardians, I resigned my future destiny to his care, and I now write to you as his happy wife.

“When I reflect on my present happiness, my dearest second mother, I cannot but feel my large debt of gratitude for your fostering care of the forlorn Gypsy’s daughter; and how can I repay you for all your kindness, and for the kindness of your children to me? Pray remember me to them all; to the grave William, the merry Betsy, or rather I should call her Mrs. George Beresford; to the good-natured Edward, and is he still called ‘Sporting Ned?’ to Mary, and to Lucy, and though last not least, to my dearest Ellen, who used to romp with me; nor must I forget my dear old governess, Mrs. Ramsay, who I hope continues in your family, and who was so kind and good to the orphan wanderer. I am almost tempted to wish that you were very poor that I might have the delight of sharing with you what we possess, for we are very rich; but your flocks and herds I hear almost cover the island, and with your large estates, your carriages, and your horses, and your baronial house, and all your patriarchal abundance, I am at a loss to know what to send out to you. I wish you could convey your fifteen thousand acres of land to England. And only think of that acre of land which Mr. Thornley bought in Hobart-Town some years ago turning out such a valuable property; but of course as land is wanted in a town for building houses on as the inhabitants increase, every square foot, as my husband says, becomes valuable.

“My dear husband has sent out two beautiful horses for Mr. Thornley, and some curious cattle and Saxon sheep for William; and I have sent a grand piano-forte with the latest improvement for Mary, which will stand very nicely at the end of your large room; and a harp for Ellen, with quantities of music. I have also to request Edward to accept the choicest double-barrel gun, with all sorts of apparatus which I don't understand, that can be purchased in London, and my husband has taken particular pains in selecting it. I was at a loss to know what remembrance to send to Lucy, but I have been fortunate enough to find a beautiful cabinet at a curiosity shop, made at Vienna for the empress Maria Louisa of France, with which I think she will be pleased, as it accords with the splendour of her romantic disposition. I have sent also a self-acting organ for Betsy, that she may have music, as she used to say she should like, without the trouble of playing. Don't you remember she used to say in her merry way, she would as soon grind the old portable corn-mill as a hand-organ? And now, what have I to say more? Oh! it is to ask you to send us another kangaroo, and some of the pretty Rosina parrots that we made such pets of.

“Mr. John Shirley is living abroad, and my affairs are still in Chancery; but as we are rich enough, we have the satisfaction, my husband says, of considering that the estates will some day come to our great grandchildren. Mr. Shirley is inclined, I understand, to compromise the matter by his being allowed a small annuity for life of three thousand a year, which would be nothing for the property to pay, and our solicitors advise us to accept it; but my husband will not forgive him for en-

deavouring to steal me away as he did, and exposing me to the risk of being killed and eaten by the natives, in order to marry me to his son. My husband says he should have liked to know Musqueeto, for he was a fine fellow for saving my life, and he says it was a shame to hang him; but the atrocities and murders that he committed are certainly very shocking. And now, my dear Mrs. Thornley, and my dear friends, I bid you for the present adieu; wishing you a continuance of your present prosperity and happiness. And that you may long live to enjoy the many delights of children, friends, fortune, and independence, with which Providence has blessed you, is the prayer of your ever affectionate and grateful

“GEORGIANA.

“*Postscript.*—I declare I had forgotten to ask after my old friend Mr. Crab. He was very old, and getting infirm, I thought, when I left the country. Is he still alive? and does he still go on grumbling and declaring that he will leave the ‘horrid, wretched country by the very next ship?’ Again,

“Yours,

“GEORGY.”

“Kind, good-hearted old man!” said I. “He will be glad to hear that the little girl, whom he was so fond of, has not forgotten her old friend; but I fear, from the account we received of him last night, that he will not be in this world long, to receive such remembrances.”

As I spoke, George Beresford arrived on horseback, and in haste, to inform us that the symptoms which had

exhibited themselves the evening before, had become more alarming, and that Betsy wished me to come over immediately. I desired a horse to be saddled instantly, and leaving my wife to follow in the carriage, I made the best of my way with my son-in-law to Cherry-tree Bottom.

On our way we called at the surgeon's, and mounting him on a led horse, which my groom had brought with him for the purpose, he accompanied us to see if art could do anything to prolong the life of my old friend.

"I fear," said the surgeon, "that all art is useless in this case; he is dying of sheer old age. How old really is he?"

"We don't exactly know," said I; "he owns to eighty two, but from his remembrance of past events in England, we think he must be much older."

We soon arrived at Cherry-tree Bottom, which was situated in a little hollow, embosomed among the surrounding hills. Crab had made it the very model of an English farm, and the rick-yard contained, in addition to several imposing stacks of wheat thatched to a nicety, and kept untouched, "because," as he said, "they made a farm-house look warm and homelike," a tolerable stack of hay made from native grass. The garden presented the autumnal maturity of luxuriance, which is so striking in this country, and an ample orchard of cherry-trees proclaimed that the name of the favoured spot was now deservedly bestowed.

On a stubble-field, enclosed within a hawthorn-hedge, two horses in a line were ploughing, with a Shropshire plough; Crab holding in abomination the colonial practice of employing bullocks in ploughs and earts. With-

CRAF, IN HIS OLD AGE, AT HIS COTTAGE DOOR.





in sight of the house, a pond had with much labour been excavated to receive the waters of a little rivulet that took its source from a distant tier of hills. Indisputable English geese and ducks disported themselves in this capacious reservoir, gladdening the old man's eyes with the picture of his early youth. But those eyes were now about to close; and with a heaviness of heart which I did not attempt to suppress, I approached the door of my ancient friend's dwelling.

We found the old man seated in an easy chair, his silvery white hair hanging on his shoulders, by an open window, having a view at the same time of his wheat-stacks, his duck-pond, and his twelve-acre wheat field, at which his servants were now at work. He had been complaining, Betsy told us, of the mistiness of the atmosphere, although the air was clear and pure—I well knew what this mistiness meant.

"Here's father coming to see you," said Betsy, raising her voice a little, for a little deafness had been for some time one of the old man's infirmities.

"Thornley, I'm glad to see you. Where are you? come closer; the air is very dim: I suppose it's the natives that have fired the country, and it's all smoke—as it always is in this place!"

"There are no natives now," said Betsy, "to fire the country; they have all been removed this many years."

"Have they? Ah! I remember something about those sweeping expeditions, and what fun it was! making a line across the country, and the natives behind us all the while wondering what we were after!"

"How do you feel, my dear friend?" said I, soothingly.

"Very weak—very weak indeed. You see, Thornley, this wretched country has killed me at last. I always said it would, but you never would believe me. But it serves me right—yes, quite right; I ought to have left it long ago. It was those hops that deluded me on."

"You have shown the colonists how to grow hops," said I, wishing to please him by a little praise which he well deserved.

"Ah! haven't I? And taught them how to make beer too! Betsy, my dear, tell them to get your father a jug of that last tap. Let me taste it." They put the cup to his lips. "How's this? it tastes oddly! Get some more in another jug. Thornley musn't come to my house, and not have a glass of ale! But I shall grow no more hops, and drink no more of my own home-brewed ale!"

"My dear friend," said I "you have lived a longer life than is ordinarily the lot of man; and your latter years have been passed in a state of prosperity far beyond your early expectations. Let us hope that the Great Being who has blessed the latter part of your career with so much wealth and ease, will regard all your complainings in this life with an indulgent eye; and that your life hereafter may be such as he has promised to those who keep his word, and trust in him."

"I don't know," said Crab—in a slow and feeble voice, his mind beginning to wander—"that I have done much amiss—except the coming to this wretched country, and the staying in it, which is worse; but I'll go home by the next ship. Not a drop of beer to be had in the country for love or money! What's the use of a

public-house if there's no beer in it? Half-a-guinea for a bottle of stout! It's shameful! Did you ever see a chap plough a field that way before? Not know what lying fallow means! You're a cockney! I don't wish to be uncivil—but you're a cockney! I say you're a cockney?"

"His mind is wandering," said the benevolent clergyman attached to the Clyde church; "but his life has been so innocent, and all his intentions so good, that if ever spirit ascended to the presence of its Maker with hope and trust, such may be the reliance of this single-hearted old man?"

My wife now arrived; but it was with difficulty that our dying friend could be made to recognise her; and when he did, his waning intellects referred to times and scenes foreign to the present.

"Mrs. Thornley," said he, in slow and feeble accents, "your poor husband has been killed by the natives; but we must bear it—we must bear it. To roast him alive; The savages! But we'll all leave the country. I'm going to leave the country. Where's Betsy?"

Betsy took hold of the old man's hand, and spoke to him.

* * * * *

The clergyman now asked him if there was anything that he wished to say, anything that he wished to have done?

The questions of the divine roused the old man to a consciousness of his present state, and recalled his mind from its feeble wanderings. But his voice became weaker and weaker, and his pulse grew more feeble in its flutterings—and it was with difficulty that we could make out the meaning of what he uttered.

"I know," he said, in a whisper scarcely articulate,—
 "that—we—must—all die!—but—I—wanted to see
 how that wheat turned out—in—the—new—field.
 George — never — plough with — oxen — and — don't —
 shoot—the bull, as you did—the—other one. I—
 am—going—I—am—going. Betsy—hold—my—hand.
 What do I feel? Betsy—I am—stifling!——I—I—
 I—can't breathe——my breath——Thornley—I am—
 going — at last—out — of this — wretch —wretch-ed—
 country—home—at—last."

And so he died.

There was not a dry eye in the room. For my own part, I sobbed like a child; although my dear old friend had died full of years and prosperity, and in peace and hope. But he was my ancient friend, my earliest companion in the colony, and I loved him for the very whims and failings for which others laughed at him.

"That was one of the best hearts in one of the roughest husks that ever I had to deal with," said the surgeon. And so thought we all, but for some time no one spoke, and I retired with a sad heart to the banks of the Clyde.

We buried our old friend in the churchyard which had been consecrated with the church by the Bishop of Australia. Over his grave I placed a modest tablet, with this simple inscription:—

HERE LIE THE MORTAL REMAINS

OF

SAMUEL CRAB

AN

ENGLISH FARMER,

AGED 86.

Chapter Forty-fourth.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE but little more to add to these memoirs. The recent events in the colony are too well known to render it necessary for me to enter into a description of them.

With respect to my own individual case, I may fairly take it as an instance of what may be done by industry, frugality, and perseverance; and of the advantages to be derived from settling in a colony, in its early stage, when its lands are unoccupied and almost worthless, and easy, therefore, to be obtained; but which, in the progress of years, and by increase of inhabitants, grow into valuable estates.

I am now declining in years, but my health is strong and firm, and I have never had a day's illness since I have been in the colony.

My old friend, the magistrate, who is now grown very rich and very fat, has been for some months past curiously inquiring into the nature of my occupations, seeing me always so busily employed in writing without any ostensible reason for such a labour. I showed the pile of manuscript to him the other day, which had accumulated to a formidable heap, and told him, in confidence, what I had been about.

“And what are you a going to do with it?” said he,

“why there is more than enough to make three volumes in print.”

“If I thought the printing of it would be useful,” said I, “although I did not begin it with that intention, I would not object to its being published.” And thereupon I offered to read to him the whole of the manuscript from the beginning to the end. I thought my worthy friend changed countenance at this offer, and not liking to give me so much trouble, I suppose, he replied:—

“For Heaven’s sake don’t think of such a thing:—I’ll take it all for granted. But what is it all about? Have you been writing a history of the island?”

“The island,” I replied, “or rather the colony, is too young as yet to have a history to write about. I have been describing,” I continued, “minutely, and from my own experience, the individual process of emigration. And I have endeavoured,” I added, “to give such descriptions of the colony, from my own observations, as will enable those who may read them to form a tolerably correct idea of what Van Diemen’s Land really is; and to teach those who have a mind to emigrate, how to set about it.”

“Well,” my excellent friend was pleased to say, “you have shut yourself up for a long time; I hope you have finished your task now? You don’t intend to write any more of your adventures?”

“No!” said I;—“HERE ENDS THE SETTLER’S JOURNAL.”

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